

BOY SCOUTS OF THE AIR

AT GREENWOOD SCHOOL



Boy Scouts of the Air Books

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at Greenwood School



As another bullet hummed past them, giving the lever to Rube, Zike leaned over and sent a fusillade of ten shots into the trees.

The
Boy Scouts of the Air
at Greenwood
School

BY
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Illustrated by Norman P. Hall

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Boy Scouts of the Air at Greenwood School

CHAPTER I

“ PREXY PORKY ”

“ Prexy Porkie ” was angry. He was mad. He was hot. He was boiling over. His real name being Bacon, the boys of Greenwood Academy naturally gave the president and master of their school the nickname of “ Porkie.” This play on the “ Old Man’s ” name struck them as a happy thought.

It was more than a general titter that greeted “ Porkie ” as he entered the assembly hall where the one hundred and sixty-five boys of the school were gathered for their regular morning lecture. There was much disorder in the room, reaching a climax almost amounting to an uproar as the master entered, straight, stiff and prim. He was tall and rather thin and wiry. He sniffed the air as if he smelled mischief. As his ferocious gaze swept the rows of seats and their occupants, every dis-

orderly movement and unbecoming sound ceased. An ominous silence reigned.

Then President Bacon, being unable to fasten any specific instance of misconduct on any boy in the hall, turned and walked toward his desk on the platform in front. Suddenly, however, he stopped short and every pupil of Greenwood Academy present held his breath. The expected storm was about to break.

And the cause of the threatened disturbance in the school atmosphere was this:

Some pupil of moderate artistic ability had drawn a picture on the front blackboard just behind "Porkie's" desk. It was a half-life-size picture of a man, tall and lean. Every boy, as soon as he saw it, knew at once whom the ridiculous chalk picture was intended to represent.

But there were two special peculiarities about the drawing that called for particular interest among the Greenwood pupils. Before presenting these features it will be necessary to explain some incidents that led up to them.

President Bacon was a man of sharp temper. He was not a hard man, for in his own peculiar way he had the welfare of his one hundred and

sixty-five boys at heart. But this was not always tempered with good judgment. The master "flew off the handle" occasionally, and woe to the lad who happened to be nearest. "Porkie" did not resort to physical violence. His methods were always "intellectual" and his manner of scoring an object of his wrath was his own.

Only two days before this incident of the picture, "Porkie" became angry with the janitor of the school. The cause of his ire is a matter of no importance here. He turned the guns of his wrath upon the lowly workman, who proved, however, to be not so humble as he was lowly. The consequence was that the dignified head of an august institution received a blue-black eye, and the janitor was discharged.

Now the master of Greenwood was most exacting in his demands for the observance of a laid-down rule. He was a man of many precepts. He issued many bulletins filled with advice, commands, instructions and injunctions. Of these he distributed copies among the boys and forced his charges to read them in concert every morning. In addition, he had special rules for special classes and these he compelled the boys to commit to

memory and to recite. One of the rules of the penmanship classes, which became very monotonous to the young students of the academy, was this:

“Dot your I’s and cross your T’s.”

When the president appeared with the blue-black eye in the lecture hall on the morning after his trouble with the janitor, Archie Chance whispered to Dick Harding:

“Porkie’s eye is dotted.”

This clever but heartless jest spread like wildfire. Dick passed it on and soon it was being buzzed over the whole room. The president was not discountenanced, however, although he must have known the cause of the mirth. But he had lost some of his customary dignity and seemed unable to glare about with his usual fierceness. Hence he found it necessary to rap loudly several times for order before he succeeded in quieting his boisterous pupils.

This story opens the following morning when “Prexy Porkie” appeared “angry — mad — hot — boiling over.” A man of his disposition might well have been stirred into a tempest of wrath, for the first view of the caricature on the

blackboard impressed him with these features:

The legs of the chalk man were close together, military fashion. The arms were extended directly and horizontally to the right and the left, with hands bent downward at the wrists—the figure presenting the appearance of a well-let-tered capital T. On the right eye of this clever but unscrupulous work of some mischievous boy was a rude drawing of a bandage, indicating that the sight organ behind it had been damaged.

Within a circular line touching the bandage were these heartless words: “This eye is dotted.” Within another circular drawing was this legend, also remindful of one of “Porkie’s” rules, “This T is crossed.”

President Bacon’s face became pale and his frame trembled. Then a great surprise followed, so great that any boy in the room would have declared it impossible. Natural color returned to the countenance of the master of Greenwood and in a short time he was looking almost pleasant. He ascended the platform and stood behind his desk. His right eye was not bandaged as was the corresponding eye of the

chalk drawing, but it still showed some discoloration from contact with the late janitor's fist.

He remained in a half stern attitude for some moments, as if not quite certain what to say or to do. Perhaps his eyes were searching the room for the author of the blackboard mischief, for suddenly he seemed to become sufficiently interested in one of the boys to let his gaze rest on him. Of course the boy trembled, although he knew of no good reason why he should.

He attempted to return the master's gaze with an innocent expression, as any other boy in the school would have tried to do under similar circumstances. But presently he heard the feared master saying in a well controlled voice:

“Don Collins, step up on the platform.”

Those were the words that Don heard and he could hardly believe his ears. What was “Prexy” about to do—accuse him of drawing the picture? Surely the president did not suspect him. What could have occurred to arouse such a suspicion? But the president was speaking again, repeating his command in sterner tones:

“Don Collins, step up on the platform.”

Don arose tremblingly and moved forward from his seat. With his eyes resting doubtfully and half fearfully on the dreaded master, he stepped up near the desk and awaited further commands from the head of the school.

The president took an eraser from his desk and handed it to Don saying:

“Here, Collins, take this and remove that work of art from the blackboard.”

“But I didn’t draw it,” protested Don huskily and with indignation.

“I didn’t say you did,” replied the president, smiling with amazing good nature that filled the mind of every boy in the room with the deepest wonder. “I’m feeling too modest this morning to permit my picture to occupy so conspicuous a place. It seems to me you would be a proper person to assist in the preservation of my modesty. If the person who drew the picture had proved more of an artist, I’d feel still more modest. Now do me the favor to erase that waste of chalk.”

Hardly able to decide whether he was awake or dreaming, Don accepted the eraser and did as requested. After he had finished his work he

turned toward Mr. Bacon with a questioning look and the latter directed him to return to his seat. This the boy did. Then the president of the school still further astonished every pupil in the room by announcing:

“Boys, we’re not going to quarrel this morning. I have something interesting to tell you.”

CHAPTER II

A NEW PLAN

This sudden change in President Bacon's manner marked an epoch in the history of Greenwood Academy. The fact was, he had found himself in danger of losing his position. Several members of the board of directors had gone to him and urged him to modify his methods of dealing with the boys.

It was true that Mr. Bacon was a man of considerable mental endowment, of good connections and one of the largest stockholders in the Greenwood Academy corporation, but he did not hold a controlling interest. If he did not keep the friendship of those other members who had warned him he knew that his throne was in danger. Because of that, "Prexy" looked himself over, reviewed some of his later history, scrutinized his blue-black eye in a mirror and decided in favor of a new course.

After he had made this decision he fell to wondering why he had not done thus long ago. He

was fifty-two years old and this certainly seemed a late day for an old dog to learn new tricks. Because of that, it is not to be wondered at if he was fearful of his ability to get rid of a cranky and disagreeable disposition.

Greenwood Academy, located on a Wisconsin river about a mile from the small city of Ober-ton, was financially a well-paying institution. It was devoted particularly to the education of half-orphan boys of wealthy parentage and those who were without living parents or whose fathers and mothers were unable to watch properly the development of their children.

Naturally there were in this company of one hundred and sixty-five boys, a number that were not of the tamest disposition. In fact, some of them were inclined to be more than wild, and this circumstance served as a good excuse for making the tuition and living charges at the school rather high.

It was little wonder that President Bacon had something of a temper, dealing as he did with such a half-Indian aggregation of boys. Perhaps, too, there is even less wonder that he nearly lost control of his good resolution to be

more lenient when he beheld the caricature of himself on the blackboard. It was only the day before that he had received the call from three of the directors burdened with suggestions. This was why on this morning he entered the assembly hall with his new and good resolve.

But as he stepped inside and noted the evidences of disorder, the old spirit came back to him with full force and he nearly "flew to pieces." The struggle within him was great and perhaps that was why he looked even more ferocious. Then he saw the drawing on the blackboard and the real test of his new resolve came. At the climax he successfully put forth a supreme effort.

After it was all over and the picture had disappeared, "Prexy" stood smiling before his audience, with the announcement that he had something of interest to tell them. Each boy waited, almost holding his breath for the next words.

"It is evident that you all need some method of working off your surplus energies," began the master at last in a composed manner. "That picture shows some young fellow here has too

much of the Old Nick in him. The question now arises as to what we shall do for a remedy."

"I might require him to do four hours' work extra for a week. I might confine him to the Reflection Room for two days. I might suspend him from athletics for a season. But I'm not going to do anything of the sort. I shall not permit anything to mar the success of a movement that is to be begun here to-day. All your past misdeeds are forgiven, whether I know of them or not—unless, of course, some one has committed a crime. But I'm sure none of you is guilty of any such thing.

"Now this is what I mean to suggest: How would you like to be Boy Scouts?"

There was a gasp of surprise throughout the room.

"Fine!" "Great!" "Me for that!" were some of the expressions of delight that met the question.

"Yes, I see you all want to be scouts," commented the president, the smile on his face becoming broader and more genuinely good-natured. "But what do you suppose I mean by a Boy Scout?"

“ A spy,” replied Hal Redfern.

“ A war detective,” called out Burt Cole confidently.

“ A fellow that sneaks into the enemy’s camp,” said Dick Harding.

“ A person sent to watch the danger line and to get information,” volunteered Don Collins slowly and thoughtfully.

“ Collins has given the best general description,” announced the master after waiting some moments for further definitions.

“ I object to all the others because they are of a too hostile nature. I don’t want any of you to become a spy or a detective or a sneak. But there are dangers that every person should be on the lookout for, in and out of wartime. Therefore, the ‘ danger line ’ suggestion of Collins is best. For the time being we’ll accept his definition — ‘ a person sent to watch the danger line and to get information.’ Now, what kind of information do you think it would be wise to send boys after? ”

“ We might try to find out who drew the picture on the blackboard,” suggested Philip Dunbar, one of a small clique of boys who could be

depended upon for more mischief and violation of rules than all the rest of the school together. In fact, Phil was the leader of this set and his proposal to the president was received with a chill of astonishment. Indeed, there were not a few who had suspected Phil of drawing the picture. And the chill was not relieved when the master replied:

“There is no need of that, Dunbar. I know already who he is.”

Phil looked boldly at the president but made no further answer. The head of the school, however, relieved the situation by continuing:

“But I have forgiven that misdeed, and the author of it need not be afraid. Now, let us forget the incident and discuss this new idea. How many of you have heard of the Boy Scouts of America?”

Nearly every boy in the room raised his hand.

“I thought so,” continued President Bacon. “But how many of you know what the organization is and why it exists?”

At first not a hand was raised. Then a few went up in an uncertain, hesitating manner.

“Tommy Pratt thinks he knows?” announced

the president cheerfully. "I hope he does. Well, Pratt, tell us what you know of the subject."

"I don't know very much," replied Tommy. "All I know is that the Boy Scouts learn to shoot guns and to be good soldiers and make long marches like they do in the army."

"I'm afraid you really don't know much about it," commented the master with a smile of amusement. "How about the rest of you who put up your hands? Have you all the same idea that Pratt has? Put up your hands again."

For a few moments not a hand was lifted. Then the president was about to call on one of those whom he remembered to have signified willingness to reply, when Don Collins volunteered some information.

"Well, Collins, what is it?" asked the president.

"The Boy Scouts," began Don, "as I understand it, go out and seek information at first hand. They camp out, go riding, boating, and study all kinds of animals and nature in general. They learn how to help those who need help, such as drowning and injured persons, and they learn

hundreds of useful things just as if they thought it all fun."

"That's an excellent explanation," exclaimed the master as Don finished. "I am proud of you, Collins. You're not a Boy Scout yourself, are you?"

"No, sir, I just read about 'em."

"Well, boys, this is all the time we can give the subject this morning. Go to your class rooms and forget about the Boy Scouts until after recitations. In a day or two I hope to have my plans completed and we will then get down to business."

The boys filed out of the assembly hall to the various recitation rooms to which they were assigned. As Don Collins was passing into the main corridor, he noticed two boys just ahead of him in earnest conversation. They were Phil Dunbar and Tommy Pratt, members of the "wild set" of the school. Don was not trying to overhear what they were saying. Indeed, the mere fact that they were deeply interested in a discussion of some subject would not have attracted more than passing notice. But he heard his name mentioned. It was Dunbar speaking.

"Don Collins thinks he's a wise guy because

he knows more about the Boy Scouts'n you did. I can't see 'at he knew so terrible much. Anybody could've guessed that. You could've guessed it yourself."

"Of course I could," asserted Tommy in a confident manner. "But say, Phil, who drew the picture on the blackboard? Did you?"

"No, I didn't. But I know who did."

"Who?"

"Don Collins."

"You don't say!"

"I'm dead certain of it. He's a big bluff. He'll do things like that an' then try to work his way into Porkie's favor. He'd ought to be told on."

"I never thought it was him," said Tommy. "But if you say so, I reckon it was."

"Of course it's so. An' you just watch me; I'm goin' to put Don where he belongs, even if Porkie did say he'd forgive ever'one. See if I don't."

The boys were so busy that they did not observe Don just behind them.

CHAPTER III

A MALICIOUS LETTER

It was in the early fall of the year that these incidents took place. All was life and action at Greenwood Academy just after the summer vacation, in which the boys had thoroughly rested and were ready for the new school year.

The Boy Scout movement at Greenwood was the chief subject of interest for several days. Groups would gather on the campus or in the gymnasium or other convenient places and discuss the project with deep interest. Sometimes this interest was favorable and at other times it was unfavorable to the plan of President Bacon.

Some of the boys, particularly the set that acknowledged the leadership of Phil Dunbar, did not take kindly to the definition of Boy Scouts offered by Don Collins in the assembly hall when the subject was introduced by the master of the school. These wanted guns and revolvers and swords and knives and hunting and "real scouting." They argued that the school ought to be

divided into two armies, with the Dunbar set at the head of one of these.

“ I’ll tell you what we’ll do,” explained Phil in conversation with a number of his followers. “ We’ll form an organization of our own if Porkie tries to put over wishy-washy work like Smarty Collins wants.” He was fond of so referring to Don. “ An’ we’ll make things warm for them other guys. We’ll get guns an’ revolvers and build a hide-out. An’ if any of the goody-guys get gay, we’ll let ’em know we’re around.”

“ But won’t we get into trouble? ” asked Billy Beckman, a cautious little fellow who seemed to be always making objections to the schemes of the bolder fellows of the set.

“ Oh, cut out that kind of talk, Billy,” replied Phil in disgust. “ You’re always talking that way. I don’t know ’at you belong to our bunch at all. If you’re afraid, go an’ join the sissy crowd — they’re more like your sort.”

When Billy became angry he had a good deal of nerve, as developments will prove. This sort of talk woke him up and he retorted:

“ Well, you can say what you like about Don

Collins, but I'll bet you he can lick you, Phil-up Dunbar."

"Phil-up" was a humorous nickname frequently applied to Phil by even his own friends.

Phil flushed with anger. With doubled fists he stepped up to Billy, who was two years younger and much smaller than himself.

"Mebbe you think *you* can do the job," he began with a half savage sneer. "Better not talk about what other people can do till it's been settled what you can do yourself."

"That's settled now," retorted Billy even more sturdily than might have been expected. "I reckon you can lick me all right. But if you don't like to have me talk out, don't talk out yourself."

"That's fair enough," put in Dick Harding who was almost as strong a leader as was Phil, being in fact almost a rival of the latter among the "wild set." "Billy's kind o' weak-kneed but he's a pretty good fellow. He knows how to keep his mouth shut when he'd ought to."

"What I want to know," declared the scowling Dunbar, "is where'd Billy get the idea Collie-dog Collins can lick me? Has he been

braggin' about it himself? If he has, just bring him 'round and I'll knock seven kinds o' tar out o' him."

"I didn't hear him say anything of the kind," answered Billy. "But I've heard a lot about the way he can wrassle. Harry Aiken says Don threw Charlie Rush and he's twenty pounds heavier than Collins. I never seen you anxious to go up against Rush."

"I can lick Rush any day with the gloves," exploded Dunbar, "an' I ain't a bit afraid o' him in a rough-and-tumble. Mebbe he knows a few holds I don't, but that's no test who's the best man. Anyhow, it won't count for much if we get down to real business. An' if you ever hear Dan Collins say anything about me, just tell him for me I'll be glad to meet him on any terms he wants. I'll give him all the odds an' lick him to a lay-down."

This conversation took place Tuesday afternoon and resulted in nothing definite, either as to a test of strength between Don Collins and Phil Dunbar or as to an organization of *real* Boy Scouts as proposed by the latter. Phil had only suggested what he might do in case a

“wishy-washy” organization such as that described by Don was formed. Saturday there were no classes. In the morning President Bacon called a meeting of the school to consider anew the Boy Scout project.

Nearly everybody seemed delighted with the revolution that had transformed the master into a likable man. Some who were humorously inclined suggested that he had discovered a cure for indigestion. At any rate, he appeared before the boys with a smile, and almost everybody seemed to catch the infection of his good nature.

“I think Porkie’s playin’ a game,” said Phil Dunbar to Larry Lecky. “He’s got somethin’ up his sleeve, you can bet on that. He’s been on the sour edge too long to change so sudden.”

This might seem a natural inference, but Phil was wrong. Mr. Bacon had merely found himself up against a necessity and was wise enough to meet conditions.

On this occasion the master of Greenwood presented a definite plan for the organization of the pupils of his school into a body of Boy Scouts. The plan was not elaborate, as the system is simple and leaves an opening for originality. He

told the boys they must begin as "tenderfeet" and that a few months later they might become "second-class scouts" by passing an examination. In order to become "first-class scouts," he explained, they must pass a more rigid examination, preparation for which would require considerable work.

"Now, boys," said the president after his preliminary remarks, "I've obtained a supply of books giving full instructions regarding the Boy Scout movement. You'll be 'tenderfeet' to begin with. First of all, we'll divide the school into two troops. This will be done by lot. Then I'll appoint two members of the faculty, Mr. Wheeler and Mr. Flood, to act as scout masters. The troops will be divided into patrols, and officers of these bodies will be selected in accordance with the rules."

The division into troops was quickly effected. Then the formation into patrols followed and the one hundred and sixty-five boys became "tenderfeet." As it happened, Phil Dunbar and Don Collins became members of one patrol and were rivals for election as leader.

The patrols consisted of eight members each

in most cases and the contests for leadership could not be so very exciting. But Stacey Williams, a friend and crony of Phil, made a long talk in favor of Dunbar for leadership in their patrol. This was followed by an equally fervent speech from Julian Hartwick in favor of Don. When the vote was taken, two ballots were found to have been cast for Phil and five for Don. One ballot was found to bear the name of Julian.

The speech of Julian Hartwick in favor of Don Collins made a favorable impression. As a rule, Hartwick was regarded as something of a mystery in the school. But his well-measured praise of the good qualities of Collins caused many of his fellow patrol associates to forget his usual quiet and solitary habits and to feel a new interest in him. Julian was generally respected by the more thoughtful, for it was he who received the highest standing in class work and examinations.

But those who measured importance by spending money and fine clothes were inclined to snub the plainly dressed Hartwick.

Stacey Williams was something of an orator and commanded a good deal of respect in the

school because of this. He was one of the star debaters of the school and his handsome appearance added to his popularity. But his skill and good looks availed him little when he championed the cause of Phil Dunbar as patrol leader.


Phil was enraged over his defeat, but for a time he managed to keep his feelings under control. After the meeting of the patrol had adjourned, however, he and several of his followers retired from the academy buildings and held a council of war. There were a number of "sore-heads" among them, for most of the members of the "Dunbar crowd" had been defeated in their attempts to secure election as patrol leaders.

Meanwhile Don and the other successful candidates immediately held a meeting with the president, at which plans were laid for the beginning of activities in the following week.

But on Monday morning something happened that indicated an unhappy undercurrent in the affairs of the school. The master of Greenwood received in his mail the following anonymous letter written in a disguised hand:

“ President Bacon:

“ Perhaps it would interest you to know that Don Collins is the fellow who drew the picture of you on the blackboard in the assembly hall. The writer of this note saw him do it.”



CHAPTER IV

THE DUNBAR SCHEME

From the moment of his election as leader of a patrol of Boy Scouts, Don Collins knew he had enemies in the school. He did his best, however, to ignore the evidence of this that was at times forced upon him. He even went so far as to extend special favors to Phil Dunbar.

The organization of the Boy Scouts completed, attention was next directed toward a program of scout work. Information on this subject was obtained from the manual President Bacon had supplied for the purpose. Because of his facility in learning the rules, Don Collins was the first boy dubbed with the complimentary title of "Good Scout." His kindness toward those who did not attempt to conceal unfriendliness toward him, made him the most popular boy in the academy. Julian Hartwick, too, advanced in popularity. The manner in which he had urged the election of Don as patrol leader had started the ball rolling in his favor. He was

found to have cast off much of his silent and retiring manner and to have become one of the boys.

Nobody seemed to know anything about Julian's history. He had been regarded as a boy of mystery up to the time of his connection with the Boy Scout movement. A number of boys, including Don Collins, who was his closest friend, made frequent remarks concerning a strangeness that seemed to attach to Hartwick. Every boy in the institution, except Julian, belonged to a family of standing and even wealth, while young Hartwick was said to be as poor as Job's turkey. How he happened to enter such a school as Greenwood was another mystery, but he paid his tuition and his board bills and ranked at the head of his classes and minded his own business. This was all that was required of him.

Julian was quick to see the new hostility Phil Dunbar held for Don, apparently without any ground. Being an admirer of the rough-and-ready, honest, athletic patrol leader, young Hartwick determined to keep an eye open for his friend's interests. Also, he meant to thwart, if

possible, any movement on the part of Dunbar or his associates to injure Don. With this end in view, Julian began to feel his way among the Dunbar element to "get on the inside of things" if possible.

In Billy Beckman he found just the sort of ally he wanted, for Billy was already "on the inside" and also entertained kindly feelings for Don. Although "Beck," as he was called, admired many "heroic" traits he detected in Phil, yet he saw in Don Collins certain qualities not to be discovered in Dunbar. If Billy was easily led, it was not always the wild, unprincipled leader who could take him in tow.

Phil Dunbar avoided Don after the defeat of his own ambition to become a leader in the Boy Scout organization. If he had disliked Collins before the latter's rise in power, he afterwards hated him and cherished hopes of soon getting even. He waited impatiently for results of his malicious note to "Porkie" regarding the blackboard caricature. But several days passed and he heard nothing on the subject. He did not confide with any of his cronies concerning his act, wisely deciding to keep it a secret.

There are certain things, he reasoned, about which even the best of friends should know nothing.

Dunbar was far from satisfied with the nature of the Boy Scout organization in the school. He had hoped that the general outline of the work of the scouts as offered by Don Collins on the day when "Prexy" first broached the subject would prove to be only an ideal easily avoided. But developments did not support this hope. The president and members of the faculty were continually dropping hints about "peace scouting" and "honor" and "courage" and "duty" and "patriotism," and Phil found himself becoming heartily sick of the whole business. True, many references were made to camping out and woodcraft and life saving, but these subjects were too much encumbered with suggestions of work and details and study to suit the wishes of Master Dunbar. Moreover, the members of the faculty were too much saturated with the idea of making good citizens and healthy sober men out of the boys to please this advocate of wild life and his idea of a good time.

And so, a few days after the new organization was completed, Phil called a meeting of his most faithful followers in an out-of-the-way place in the timber half a mile from the school. This was a favorite place for discussing subjects that it was desirable to keep secret. It was a small grassy spot on the side of a hill and was surrounded by shrubbery. The timber was owned by a man who lived in another state, and trespassers found themselves free to enjoy the beauty and wildness of the place whenever they desired.

Nine of Dunbar's most trusted colleagues and followers were asked to be present at this meeting. Besides these, Billy Beckman was invited, although Phil would gladly have left him out. A peculiar circumstance made this inadvisable. Billy was a cousin of Stacey Williams and Stacey was perhaps the best friend Phil had in the school. Moreover, Billy's father was very rich and young Williams, who really was a shrewd fellow, knew which side his bread was buttered on. The fact was that Stacey's father was only moderately well-to-do and Billy managed to see that his cousin was occasionally

supplied with spending money that Stacey could not have obtained at home. Phil Dunbar knew nothing of this condition of affairs. He always supposed Stacey's father to be very wealthy. But for this, he and Stacey might have been less closely associated. But Stacey dressed well and seemed to have a supply of pocket money. So what other conclusion would have been more natural? Phil never showed much inclination to favor Billy. He even exercised something of a dictatorship over the little fellow, being careful, however, not to offend the latter's cousin. On the occasion when Dunbar resented Billy's praise of Don Collins as Phil's physical superior, Stacey was not present.

The boys seated themselves in the grassy plot where they had threshed out many of their troubles and unfair treatment, imaginary and otherwise. They had not come to the meeting place in a body, as it was their plan on such occasions to attract as little attention as possible. So they approached from various directions, singly or in twos.

"I called you fellows here to find out what you think of the situation," began Phil after

all had arrived. "It seems to me a change is needed at Greenwood Academy to keep the faculty from makin' a lot o' pie-faced sissies out o' us."

"There's nobody in the bunch that disagrees on that," declared Stacey emphatically. "But what can we do?"

"We might make a kick at home," suggested Phil. "I bet that would start somethin'."

"I'm scared my old man'd take me out o' school if I told him how things were bein' run," objected Hugh Alford. "He wouldn't spend much time investigatin'. He'd more'n likely put me to work."

"It wouldn't do to raise a howl at home," added Henry Clayton. "It's up to us to show Prexy Porkie we've got heads o' our own."

Phil slapped Henry on the back and shouted: "Good for you, Hank. With a patrol o' such fellows as you, we ought to show Porkie what it takes to make a real scout.

"But jokin' aside, kids, somethin' ought to be done. Let's form a patrol of our own an' call it Boy Scouts or whatever you want to. We'll go to some secret place an' build a hide-

out o' some sort and do whatever we please. We'll have guns and revolvers and huntin' and fishin' outfits. We can ditch some class an' study hours an' have some great old sport."

"What kind o' hide-out would you make and where'd you have it?" asked Stacey.

"A cave or a dugout," replied Phil. "We can have it in the wooded hill over by the river, south o' here. We could even sneak out to-night—it will be moonlight—and do our work while the good boys sleep. We can do that in shifts night after night and then the work'll be goin' on all the time."

"That scheme's O.K.," chuckled Stacey. "Let's begin to-night. We'll go right now an' look over things so we'll know how to begin."

"Wait!" exclaimed Phil. "I've got something more to say. You know what a funny guy Church-mouse Jule Hartwick is. I know something about him. He's more of a mystery than you kids think. He's sneakin' out nights for some reason right along. There's somethin' in the wind, I'll bet you. Say! mebbe Porkie suspicious somebody o' doin' somethin' he oughtn't to do and has set Church-mouse spyin'.

If he suspicions, Prexy may set him watchin' us. Mebbe I'm wrong. Mebbe Church-mouse is only doin' somethin' of his own he wouldn't have anybody get onto. Whatever it is I can't guess. But there's somethin' goin' on. If we're goin' to be reg'lar scouts, it'd be fun to run Hartwick down and find out what's his game."

Everybody had a question to ask regarding details. Had Phil seen Julian sneak out of the dormitory at night? Had he followed him and seen where he went? Had he observed anything especially suspicious in his actions?

Yes, Phil said he had seen "Church-mouse" leave the dormitory at ten o'clock in the evening on two occasions. This was an hour when all the boys under the rule of the school were supposed to be wrapt in slumber. On the second occasion Phil had seen the boy mysteriously skirt along the edge of the campus under the trees and disappear toward the southeast.

"How did he leave the dormitory?" asked Stacey.

"Through his window."

"Who bunks with him?"

“ Nobody. He has the little single room on the first floor next to the shower baths.”

“ What time did he get back? Do you know? ”

“ No. I was too sleepy both times to stay up and watch. But I saw him come out of his room on the morning after the last time I saw him sneak out.”

“ Did you notice anything unusual in him? ”

“ No, I just looked him square in the eye and he looked back at me as innocent as if he was wearin’ angel wings.”

“ He’s a fox,” said Stacey. “ We’ll have to set a trap for him.”

CHAPTER V

HINDERED PLANS AND STRANGE ACTIONS

The boys continued their discussion of the Julian Hartwick mystery until they exhausted speculation. Their next move was to proceed a quarter of a mile to the south and look over the ground where it was proposed to make the hide-out. The spot was ideal. It was on a hill by the river, so formed by nature as to make an excellent place of concealment. They worked their way through the timber until they came to an almost perpendicular section of the hill facing the river. This place, just sufficiently removed from the water to leave a convenient vacant spot in front, was well shielded by a forest growth.

“Here’s the place we’re lookin’ for,” announced Phil with much satisfaction. “We can dig a cave in the side of this bank and if we’re careful, nobody’ll ever find us. I tell you, kids, it looks like we’re goin’ to have some gay old times.”

"How'll we find the place after dark?" inquired Billy Beckman dubiously.

"There you are, at it again," answered Dunbar severely. "Billy, how d'you ever expect to do anything? You're always objectin' and findin' fault."

Phil lost sight of the fact that he was a great objector himself. For instance, he had opposed all the plans of Don Collins in connection with the Boy Scout organization.

"Are we comin' out here to-night to dig?" was Billy's only answer.

"Some of us are. You don't need to if you don't want to. You don't have to do any work if you don't want to. We'll do it all and you can enjoy the benefits."

There was downright sarcasm in Phil's voice that Stacey Williams did not like. However, the controversy between Dunbar and Billy was closed by a suggestion from one of the boys that it was time to hurry back for supper.

But no expedition to the scene of the proposed cave was made that night. The reason for this was that the boys were unable to get the needed picks and shovels in time. There-

fore a postponement was announced until the following evening. Another meeting of the Dunbarites was held after supper and an organization was formed. At this meeting two new recruits were present, both having been cautiously sounded. When found "safe" they were invited by Phil to be present. The Dunbar contingent now numbered thirteen but the boys were not superstitious as to this "hoodoo" number.

The meeting was held in a secluded corner of the campus near the gymnasium. Phil Dunbar was elected temporary chairman and later president without a dissenting vote. In his own circle, at least, he was certainly popular. After the election the matter of a name for the organization was taken up.

"Let's call ourselves 'The Happy Hide-Out Club,'" suggested Stacey Williams when President Dunbar announced this order of business.

This name was so favorably received that it was adopted at once in the midst of a burst of enthusiasm. Then Stacey proposed that they draw up a set of resolutions regarding the purpose of the organization.

“That’s a good idea,” said Phil. “First, suppose we set ourselves down as enemies of the Boy Scout bunk at Greenwood because it is a wishy-washy goody-goody business. Then we’ll pledge ourselves in favor of real manhood, such as Prexy Porkie never knew anything about — bravery, courage, feats of strength and endurance. We’ll simply turn those sissy friends of Collie-dog Collins green with envy. We’ll show Prexy and the faculty they ain’t got us under their thumbs.”

“But we’ll have to take part in the Boy Scout programs and follow the rules, won’t we?” inquired Billy Beckman.

“Yes, Billy,” replied Phil with a blink of both eyes intended to be very comical. “We’ll make out that we’re obeyin’ orders and we will — sometimes. These sometimes’ll be no more’n we’ve got to. O’ course we’ll make the patrol leaders and the faculty think we’re workin’ with ’em just as nice as can be. But all the while we’ll work among the boys of the school and win ’em over to us one by one. Before Prexy and the faculty and Collie-dog and some o’ the others know what’s goin’ on, we’ll have a rebellion

started. And they won't be able to stop it until we get what we want. Then, some fine day, we'll spring it on the goody-goody bunch and cause a revolution. You fellows just stick with me and I'll show you how to do things."

Before the boys adjourned to reach the dormitory at the required time, nine o'clock under the rules of the school, Stacey Williams was made secretary and asked to draw up a set of articles outlining the purpose of the club and to present it at the next meeting. The membership also was divided into two shifts to work on alternate nights at the digging of the proposed cave near the river. A coin was tossed to determine which of these divisions should begin the work on the following night. This duty fell to the division of which Dunbar was a member.¹ Each member of the club agreed to buy a shovel or a spade or a pick or an axe for use in this labor.

Meanwhile Don Collins was busy day after day, minding his own business. He knew Dunbar bore no love for him but he hoped that by treating Phil as well as he knew how the situation might be relieved. But it is no easy task to work with a person who doesn't like you. And Phil's un-

friendliness was even the more trying since it was the covered-up kind. At times Don thought he was beginning to win the friendship of his enemy. Then an unguarded word or look in Phil's eyes warned him to be on the watch.

President Bacon said nothing about the unsigned letter regarding the caricature. Having undergone a change of heart concerning methods of managing his pupils, he knew that the criticism of himself in the drawing was well merited. He therefore decided to take his medicine in silence. When he told Phil Dunbar, in the presence of the entire school, that he knew who drew the picture, he was not strictly speaking the truth. However, he did not intentionally utter a falsehood for he really believed Phil was the culprit. But he did not know it positively.

The president carefully examined the anonymous letter, paying particular attention to the handwriting. He compared it with writing of Dunbar on file among examination papers, but it was so cleverly disguised that the master of Greenwood could not fix the authorship.

On the day following the organization of the Happy Hide-out Club, Phil was made the victim

of a disappointment through Don Collins. Of course, Don had no intention of doing anything that would cause his enemy trouble of mind. That was not his method of converting such people into friends. But the thing happened without design on the part of the patrol leader, and meanwhile Don knew nothing of the bitter feelings that were aroused toward him in consequence.

The act that incensed Phil was the calling of a camping expedition of the patrol. The time of starting for this outing was on the afternoon just before the evening when Dunbar and several of his pals were planning to begin work on the cave of the Happy Hide-outers. This camping out was scheduled to last several days. Four patrols were to go together and to be accompanied by a member of the faculty. To be sure, Don was not responsible for such a move. He was merely following the orders of his superiors. But Phil chose to blame the patrol leader for this interference with his own plans, pretending to believe Don had "put Prexy up to it."

Word was hurriedly passed among the members of the outlaw club, informing all of the effects of the camping-out call. At the same time Phil

issued permission for such of his followers as were so inclined, to proceed to the site of the proposed new hide-out on that night and begin work.

The new Boy Scout movement was regarded by the president and the faculty as an important part of the school work. Therefore, excursions were planned along with the general course of work. The country for miles around the school and the neighboring city was thickly wooded and picturesque with river banks and numerous hills. The camping place selected for the outing of the four patrols was about five miles east of the school and near the river.

The trip to this place was made in a steam launch belonging to the school. A clean lawn-like opening not far from the river bank was selected and tents were pitched. The boys were clothed in the regulation brown suits, knee bloomer-like pants and rough rider hats of the Boy Scout style. All went to work with a will, even Dunbar taking considerable interest in the proceedings and for the time forgetting the keenness of his disappointment.

On that evening many of these boys learned their first lesson in camping out under the Boy

Scout system. This was closely related to woodcraft, of which the scouts were about to make an intimate study. Some of them cast lines into the river and caught a supply of bass for supper. Others were engaged in making the camp comfortable or in preparing for the supper. The meal was eagerly enjoyed by all, again not excluding Phil Dunbar, who spoke with unusual cheerfulness to Don Collins on several occasions.

After supper the scouts sat around in a circle discussing the pleasure of their outing and telling stories. Mr. Flood, the member of the faculty in charge of the boys, was the leading spirit in all their doings, ably assisted by Don Collins and, to the surprise of many, Julian Hartwick. At last the boys became sleepy and a motion that they turn in was welcomed by all.

As it was a dry, clear, warm night, most of the boys decided to sleep outside the tents, although comfortable sleeping accommodations were provided within these. They spread blankets on the ground, improvised pillows or did without them as they pleased, and soon most of the scouts were asleep. But, to be correct, two of the boys were not inclined to sleep. And neither of these knew of the wakefulness of the other.

One of these sleepless fellows was Julian Hartwick and the other was Phil Dunbar. Why Phil should not have closed his eyes in forgetfulness of his surroundings and his troubles would be hard to state. Perhaps it was because he was thinking hard. As for Julian, he had a very clear and definite reason for not going to sleep. But this is not the place for explaining it.

The moon rose over the trees and looked down on the slumbering camp. Presently one supposed sleeper arose on his elbow and looked cautiously around. Unconsciousness seemed to have settled over the whole camp excepting himself. Then the alert boy removed the light blanket that covered him, raised himself to a half crouching position and sneaked carefully off toward the timber. It was Julian Hartwick.

But he was not unobserved. A pair of keen eyes was watching his every movement. As he neared the edge of the timber, Phil Dunbar also arose and crouchingly followed the mysterious Boy Scout.

CHAPTER VI

REAL SCOUTING

There is usually a twig that is stepped upon and snapped by the hero or villain who is endeavoring to keep secret his movements. Perhaps a scout of pioneer times or even a well-trained Boy Scout would never have committed such a blunder. But Phil Dunbar did it and the natural consequences followed.

Snap! It was a noise loud enough to terrify the already fear-excited Dunbar. He had stepped on a sapless twig and broken it. He expected Julian to turn, and to see the whole camp aroused. But to his astonishment and relief there followed no such result. He halted for a few moments, prepared to throw himself upon the ground. Then he cautiously continued on his way after the disappearing Hartwick.

Perhaps Don Collins had reached that stage in his dreams where a snapping noise was just the thing to startle and awaken him. At any rate, something caused him to pop open his eyes at

that moment. He was just in time to see the astonishing scene in the little drama that was being enacted. All he had to do was to open his eyes and look. It was not necessary for him to change his position in the least.

So well composed was he and so vividly did the scene impress him that he remained motionless as long as the fading figures remained in view. He was uncertain for several moments whether he was awake or asleep and after he had decided that he was awake he found himself wondering if he was in his right mind. Just as Phil was disappearing within the shadows Don decided that at least something peculiar was going on.

He had recognized both the boys, Julian in advance and in the timber and Phil following in a stealthy, suspicious manner. Although Don knew less than Phil about the mystery surrounding Julian, the present situation was enough to set his wits agog and to make him alive to a lot of possibilities.

Phil was no sooner within the blackness of the trees than Don was also on his feet and in pursuit. He did not stop to find out if anybody else

were awake and watching but gave his whole attention to those ahead and to taking every precaution against being detected. He was careful not to make the blunder made by Phil, that of stepping on a stick. He knew how to travel with a yielding step that reduced the possibility of noise.

But this precaution did not interfere with his speed and he soon had Phil again in sight. The latter was moving rapidly after the fleeing Hartwick through the woodland shadows and moonlight. Why Julian should make such speed was unexplainable. But, after he had gone about two hundred yards, he slowed down to a rapid walk. Apparently he had fled from the camp at a swift pace because he wished to get out of sight of any of his schoolmates who might awaken. Then, in his eagerness to be on the safe side he had continued to run several minutes after it would have been impossible for anyone in the camp to see him.

But his continued hurried pace even after he had ceased to run, indicated that he also had other reasons for haste. This fact was not immediately evident to Don, for he was unable to

get more than an indistinct view of Julian in the course of the pursuit, but the speed of the leading boy was easily measured by that of Dunbar, whom Don was careful to keep in plain sight.

The moon was shining brightly, otherwise Don might have been unable to do this. Since all the conditions seemed to favor him, Don would have really enjoyed the pursuit had it not been that there was a suggestion of recklessness in the escapade that made him fearful of results.

"If Phil Dunbar means mischief to Julian, I'm goin' to see that he don't succeed," Don told himself with compressed lips and clenched fists. "There's somethin' mighty funny about this an' I want to know what it is. What Julian means ain't none o' my business, but it seems to be my duty to find out about Phil."

The course continued through the timber for half a mile, there being a beaten path that the leader followed part of the way. The strung-out boys climbed two fences before they came to an open stretch of pasture land which continued for another half mile. Then they followed a road another mile, when Julian suddenly led his pursuers into the timber again.

During the course of this singular journey there was scant evidence of human occupation of the land. The forests were large, and apparently little use was made of them. The open land was devoted to pasturage but these fields were so large in comparison with the number of farm animals on them, that they seemed almost deserted.

In the part of the journey that led the boys along the open highway, Phil dropped to a greater distance behind Julian than when they were passing through the woods. Don fell back to a correspondingly greater distance behind Phil. This the pursuers did of course, that there might be less chance of discovery.

Don was not personally afraid of being discovered, for he had no fear of a physical encounter with his enemy. But he knew that to carry on the present investigation he must not permit any spirit of bravado to interfere with his plans.

Likewise Phil was exceedingly cautious in following Julian. He kept himself constantly on the alert, ever ready to drop to the ground if the boy ahead of him should turn to examine the road or the timber behind. Julian, however, never once

looked to the rear after getting away from the camp. He felt that he had made good his departure unobserved and it never occurred to him to look for "scouts on his trail."

Before the trip was finished, both Phil and Don surmised that the reason Julian had traveled so rapidly was that he wished to be able to return to the camp in good season. In this they were right. The course that Julian took led at first directly from the river. But the stream made a bend farther along and as the boys neared the end of their trip they found themselves close to the water once more. Julian now led the way from the open road through a stretch of woods about a quarter of a mile wide, and into a good sized clearing. In the midst of this were standing a small one-story house and what appeared to be a large barn.

Only one sign of activity was to be seen in the place. That was smoke pouring out of a large chimney or smokestack on the barn. From this building also issued certain peculiar sounds that one would not have expected in such a place. Otherwise, the clearing presented a picture of desertion. No fences, no pig pens, no chicken coops — nothing to indicate a farmer's home.

The sounds from the "barn" falling upon one's ear at such a time and in such an out-of-the-way place, lent a weirdness to the scene that was almost uncanny. The strange accoustics of the "barn" caused the noises to rise in a deep, heavy yet hollow tone, almost as if from an empty vault. It seemed as if a machine shop of some sort were being operated by laboring ghosts.

The beating of a hammer, the rasping of a saw on metal, the running of machinery by steam power — all were heard by the three boys along the edge of the clearing. To them the sounds came with widely varying sensations. Julian knew what was going on within the structure. Phil did not know and was cudgeling his brain for a solution. Don was entangled in a double problem; that of the original mystery connected with the mission of the Hartwick boy and the remarkable actions of the boy who was spying on Julian. The situation had its dramatic side.

But the boys had not stood at the edge of the timber long before one of them ended the suspense. It was Julian, who put his fingers to his mouth and blew three shrill whistle-blasts. The signal was answered by the opening of a door, and

the whistler hurried into the open and approached the building. The swinging of the door, although it let out a shaft of light into the shadow of the barn, did not afford a good view of the interior. The form of a man stood in the doorway. As Julian passed in, the door was closed and the watchers outside were little the wiser for the scene that had just been enacted.

No sooner had Julian entered the building, however, than it became evident to Don that Phil was bent on a new move. The latter, as an evidence of this intention, stepped out from beneath the trees and approached the structure within which the Hartwick boy had disappeared. It soon became evident that his purpose was to get a view of the interior. He moved around the building, examining it closely, while Don ran with all his speed around the edge of the clearing to keep the form of the inquisitive boy in view.

Of course Don had some difficulty in accomplishing his purpose, for he had much the longer path to travel. Finally, however, as he rounded one corner of the building at a distance of a hundred feet or more, he found that Phil had stopped and was evidently enjoying something of a fulfill-

ment of his wishes. It was on the side of the barn on which the moon shone, and Don in the woods could plainly see the scout in the center of the clearing with face close to a window through which he was eagerly peering.

Now Don, although much mystified by the strange actions of his friend Julian, had confidence in that boy and was disposed to protect his interests whenever called upon to do so. He realized the questionable appearance of his friend's actions and the unhappy thought came to him that here might be an explanation of how this seemingly poor boy was able to pay his way at an expensive school. This might be the headquarters or "plant" of a counterfeiting gang or of some other law violators with whom Julian was connected. The bare suspicion of such a possibility filled Don with horror. He even longed to rush forward and take his friend aside to question him about such possible associations. But, as he remembered the frank, open, honest expression always to be found on Julian's countenance he abandoned this thought.

Don at once put aside his desire to penetrate the secret of Julian's actions. And he instantly de-

spised Phil because of the latter's disposition to pry into his friend's business, especially when he probably had no other purpose than one inspired by malice. So he had not long watched the spying figure of Dunbar by the window of the mysterious building before he determined to make some move to thwart his design.

But the problem was how to accomplish this without revealing his own presence. Time was flying. Every moment Phil was undoubtedly getting information that would be used for the injury of the boy who had led them into this remarkable place. What could Don do to compel Phil to abandon his spying position?

Suddenly a thought came to him. At his feet he noticed many stones of various sizes. He picked up several of these. He was already concealed in the shadows of the trees but in order to make his concealment doubly certain, he stepped behind a tree. Then he shied one of the stones toward Dunbar. It lit within a few feet of the spying boy and startled him nearly out of his wits.

Dunbar jumped back in alarm and cried out in his astonishment. Then he looked hurriedly

around to discover the source of the disturbance. He peered in every direction, even looking around the corners of the building, but could discover nothing to explain the source of his alarm. This seemed to reassure him and he cautiously returned to the window.

Don was highly gratified at the effect of his first attempt. So much satisfaction had he found in the experiment that he decided he would keep it up in an effort to bewilder Phil into confusion and panic. But Don's enthusiasm got the better of him. When he threw the next stone — crash! — it went right through the window where Phil was standing.

CHAPTER VII

A PLACE OF MYSTERY

A more frightened person than Phil Dunbar when the stone zipped through the window pane like a bullet, it would be hard to find. He did not wait to investigate but turned and fled, running, as it chanced, directly toward the spot where the hurler of the missile was standing.

Don saw him coming and hugged close to the tree. As the scurrying Phil passed, Don emitted a sound like the fierce snarling of some wild animal. At this the terrified Phil let forth a shrill yell that rang through the forest. The sound did not fall pleasantly on Don's ears and he began to rebuke himself at once for his recklessness. It was certain now that he must make all haste to get clear of the vicinity. The occupants of the building would surely let no grass grow under their feet until the breaking of the window and the frightened scream had been investigated. Don was also certain that Phil's fright was all that was necessary to drive him

from the neighborhood and possibly back to the camp.

But before Don could make a move to escape, the door at the front end of the building, if it might be said to have a front, was thrown hastily open and several persons, including Julian, rushed out. That they had an understanding as to what direction to take to reach the source of the disturbance was evident. Don quickly turned and followed the fleeing Phil in order to escape capture himself. He felt certain that he had not been seen by the pursuers. But he advanced carefully in his flight lest he make a sound that would give the investigators useful information.

As he did not wish to stumble onto Phil Dunbar, Don changed his course to a direction that he believed would avoid the path of the first fugitive. His reasoning was correct and he saw nothing of Phil as he raced through the woods for several hundred yards.

Then he stopped and listened. Not a sound of pursuit reached his ears. The question then arose as to what he should do next. Ought he to remain in the neighborhood and watch for the possible return of Dunbar? Or ought he hasten back to camp?

These questions could not be answered without deliberation and even then any decision would be doubtful. True, it seemed that Phil must have been frightened nearly out of his wits by the startling incidents, but there was a question of how long his terror might last. He might, indeed, recover his courage after finding he had eluded his pursuers, and decide to return and continue his investigation.

Don remained standing for several minutes, deliberating on the situation. Finally he decided to sit down and rest, for he had been exerting himself and now found that he was very tired. So interesting had been the developments of the night, that up to this time he had paid no attention to his physical condition. Now he was astonished to find how nearly exhausted he was. This condition was not merely a result of his long journey but because of the rough nature of the country over which he had traveled. It is no easy task to race two miles or more through thick timber and over unknown ground at night, no matter how well lighted by the moon. Moreover, the excitement contributed much toward Don's exhaustion, although it also kept him alert and active while exertion was necessary.

Don did not know how long he sat with his back against a tree and turning over the problem as to what the next move ought to be. Perhaps it was half an hour. In this time he heard not a sound of pursuit and finally convinced himself that none had been made beyond the limits of the clearing. Thereupon he decided to return and make an inspection of the clearing and, if he saw no signs of Phil, to return at once to camp.

Don had no difficulty in finding the place again, being aided by the moon, whose position in reference to the buildings he had observed. Moreover, as he reapproached the place he could hear again the sounds of the workers' tools and the machinery and concluded that the throwing of the stone and the smashing of the window had not been taken very seriously.

No sign of Phil was seen by Don when he reached the edge of the clearing and looked searchingly for the young spy. Then he made a circuit of the place, cautiously keeping within the shadows of the trees and muffling his tread. He devoted several minutes to this inspection and, observing nothing suspicious, at last decided to return to the camp. He had no means of de-

termining whether Julian was still in the building but concluded that his friend had not yet departed unless his mission was merely that of a messenger and had been quickly performed.

His investigation finished to his satisfaction, Don set out on the return trail. He easily decided on the general direction in which the camp lay, relative to the open place in the woods, and he traveled with good confidence during most of the return journey. But as he approached the supposed vicinity of the tents and his sleeping fellow scouts, he found himself considerably at a loss as to the exact locality of the place. The position of the moon had changed several degrees during his absence and this added to his uncertainty. When he started from the camp, he had taken no time to make calculations concerning his direction.

But finally, after wandering about for several minutes, convinced several times that he was lost, he struck the river. This gave him new confidence and he was sure that he had not traveled farther than the tents. Following the bank of the stream for a quarter of a mile, he was suddenly gratified by a view of the white tent canvas showing yellow in the moonlight.

It was long after midnight and Don was certain that in spite of the exciting experiences of the night he would fall asleep the moment his head touched the pillow. He wondered if Phil had yet returned. He would have made a search for him and for Julian also, but he was afraid of being discovered. He did not know just where either of them had been lying before they set out on their mysterious journey and he could make out only one unused blanket on the ground. This caused him to suspect that Phil had returned and that Julian was still away.

Don's prediction that he would fall asleep at once was fulfilled and he knew nothing more until the morning sun, shining full in his face, awakened him. Phil and Julian were both in camp. The latter was already up and stirring around assisting in preparing breakfast. Phil was still asleep, lying on a blanket about twenty-five feet from the spot where Don had slept. But he soon awoke, arose and made his toilet, which consisted of washing his face and hands and combing his hair.

Nothing in the manner of either Phil or Julian indicated a suspicion directed toward Don, al-

though the latter observed Dunbar frequently watching the Hartwick boy in a peculiar manner. Don studied the situation seriously. He wondered if he ought not make a confession to Julian and tell him all that had occurred the night before. It might enable his friend to guard against further sneaking actions by his enemy. But the uncertainty of Julian's mission to the sequestered spot in the woods caused Don to hesitate. The consequence was that he did nothing.

The day was spent by the campers in following a Boy Scout program. They had to work it out together, and the instructor, Mr. Flood, found that he as well as the boys was something of a pupil, for he discovered that some of the young scouts could teach him a good deal in the art of woodcraft. However, all worked out the program with mutual interest and much benefit. They stalked animals of the hills and the timber, such as porcupines, rabbits and birds, and watched their actions and made notes of peculiarities they could not understand. They examined the bark of various trees and endeavored to find interesting peculiarities in the vegetation about them.

This occupied the attention of the boys for the

day. Don and Julian worked together a good part of the time. Before this, although they had always been good friends, they had never associated with each other intimately enough to feel the friendship that exists between chums. On this day, however, the two exchanged confidences.

Julian heard from Don that the latter's home was in Chicago, that his parents were dead and that an uncle was his guardian. His father had been a merchant and his uncle had been his father's partner before the latter's death.

Don learned that Julian also was an orphan and that his home had been a small town in Wisconsin before his parents died. At present, however, he had no permanent home, although he visited occasionally a brother in Madison, Wisconsin. His vacations were devoted to any labor that would enable him to save money for the expenses of the succeeding school year. But Don could not help wondering at this. It seemed hardly probable that so young a person as Julian could command sufficient wages to supply any considerable part of the money needed for paying the bills at such an expensive school as Greenwood. However, he did not become inquisitive and he accepted

as sufficient the information his friend volunteered. Don would have been pleased had Julian offered some explanation of the mystery of the night journey to the distant place in the woods. But he had a habit of minding his own business and the subject was not mentioned by either. Nevertheless, because of the frank countenance of this fellow Boy Scout, Don was willing to give him the benefit of every doubt.

On one occasion when the two boys happened to be alone in the timber carrying out a part of the day's program, they fell into a talk which ran as follows:

"You and Phil Dunbar seem to be gettin' along better than usual," said Julian. "How'd it happen? Have you made up?"

"Oh, we never had any quarrel exactly," replied Don, "although he always acted as if he'd like to chew my ears off. Yes, he has been a little more decent, out here anyway. I hope he's gettin' over his grouch. But how is it between you and him, Jule? He never had a lot o' love for you, did he?"

"Not much. He seemed to be thinkin' more of the bunch he bosses around as he pleases."

“How’s he acted toward you out here?” asked Don with a deeper meaning than was apparent on the surface.

“Kind o’ decent. I am su’prised, too. Don’t know what to make of it. I never thought he had any use for me at all.”

“I’m sorry to see one thing,” went on Don. “I don’t like to see Beck under Phil’s thumb. Billy ain’t a bad fellow but he’s dragged around too much by fellows I don’t stand for.”

“He hasn’t been with the Dunbar bunch yesterday or to-day,” replied Julian. “Prof. Flood has him in tow. I guess he’s got his eye on Billy.”

At suppertime the boys laid their hats aside, for Mr. Flood informed them there were certain table manners that should be observed even out in the woods where etiquette is supposed to be forgotten. After the meal was finished most of the boys put on their headgear again, but Don and Julian were each surprised to find a bit of folded paper pinned to his hat. Suspecting a joke, Julian examined his and read the following, written with a lead pencil:

“ Look out. You are being watched day and night.

A Friend.”

Don’s note, similarly written, read thus:

“ Don’t be fooled by P. D’s friendly manner. He means mischief. He wrote a note to Prexy telling him you drew the picture on the black-board.

A Friend.”

CHAPTER VIII

GHOST STORIES

“ Somebody watchin’ me! What for? ”

“ Who in the world did that? ”

These were the questions Julian and Don asked themselves after they read the notes that had been pinned to their hats. Don looked at Julian and saw him gazing at a bit of paper in his hand and he guessed correctly that his friend had also received an anonymous warning. But he thrust his own into his pocket with the intention of saying nothing about it for the present. He knew more about the Hartwick boy’s affairs than the latter suspected, and he feared that it might cause his friend embarrassment if he attempted to exchange confidences about the notes.

Julian, however, felt no such hesitation. Although he had secrets he wished to keep from Collins, he felt that his patrol leader was the only boy in camp in whom he cared to confide on the subject of his mysterious warning. So he watched his opportunity and, a little later, called Don aside.

“I want to see you alone, Don,” he said.
“Let’s take a stroll in the woods.”

Collins consented, suspecting what his friend wanted. He was glad that Julian had taken this course, as he desired to talk the matter over with him. After they were out of sight of the camp they stopped under a large oak. There Julian presented his note.

“See what I found pinned to my hat after supper.”

Don read and of course was not surprised. He knew who was watching Julian. Then he gave his own note to his friend, saying:

“See what I found pinned to mine.”

Julian read, nor was he greatly surprised. He was prepared to suspect anything of Phil Dunbar.

“Who do you think’s watchin’ me?” asked Hartwick.

“It’s Phil,” replied Don.

“How do you know?”

“I’ve seem him. He thinks you’re up to somethin’ funny, I guess.”

“But this note says I’m bein’ watched ‘day an’ night.’”

“Mebbe you are. But I think you needn’t

care. I bet he's got an idea he'd make a crack detective an' is practicin' on you."

"Is he watchin' you?"

"Not that I know of. Mebbe he is though. You see what my note says about him."

"What kid wrote these notes, Don?"

"I don't know, Jule. I'm goin' to try to find out."

"So'm I."

This ended their interview and the two boys returned to the camp.

There was work that kept all hands busy for an hour. Then Mr. Flood announced that all was ready for the night. It was still early and several suggestions were made as to what the boys should do before turning in. None of them, however, seemed practicable, because of the falling darkness, until Don proposed they tell stories.

"That's a good idea," commended Mr. Flood.

"Come on, boys; sit around in a circle and we'll begin."

"We ought to have a camp fire," said Billy Beckman.

"Another good idea," announced the instructor. "We won't build a big one, as the owner

of this land might object, and, besides, it's a warm evening. Some of you boys gather a few dead limbs and we'll start things going in regular scout style."

This work was quickly performed and fiery tongues were soon licking their way through a little pile of wood, around which all gathered. It was now almost as dark as it ever becomes under a clear, starlit sky. The depths of the woods were masses of blackness. Near the east edge of the clearing were the ruins of an old shanty that had been used for sleeping quarters of woodcutters several years before. Here and there in the clearing was a stump of a tree that, in the darkness, appeared like a tombstone warning to the score of forest giants that looked mutely down upon them.

In the midst of this scene the little fire blazed, and the company of white-faced boys sitting around the burning limbs inspired this suggestion from Don Collins:

"Let's tell ghost stories."

"That's the stuff."

"Ghost stories!"

"Who'll tell the first one?"

These and other expressions of approval settled the matter.

"It's up to you, Don," said one of the boys. "You got to start the ball rollin'."

"I can't think of one," replied Collins. "Let some one else start it. 'I'll try an' have one ready next.'"

Don had an idea and he wanted time to get it into shape. He wanted to tell a story that would interest everybody and also contain a subtle meaning for the benefit of Phil Dunbar. Mr. Flood proved to be a good teller of ghost stories and he related one with a comical climax that pleased the boys very much. But Collins did not listen to it. He was thinking hard. When the instructor had finished and the boys had had a good laugh, Mr. Flood said:

"Now, Don, it's your turn."

"All right," assented Don. "Here goes:

"It was a dark and lonely night —"

"Course it was," interrupted Bert Foster.

"Ghosts are asleep any other time."

"But this is an Indian ghost. They never go to sleep. As I was sayin': It was a dark an' lonely night. An Indian maiden sat alone in her father's cabin —"

"Indians don't have cabins; they have wigwams," objected Phil Dunbar.

"They have 'em on the reservations," replied Don, who had decided for the purpose of his story that he must have windowpanes in the Indian home, and he could not put them in a wigwam.

"Well, this Indian girl sat alone in her father's cabin on the reservation one dark and lonely night. As she sat there, she heard a knock on the door. She knew who it was, for she expected her sweetheart —"

"Haw! haw! He's tellin' us a love story," shouted Phil. "Who cares fer that?"

"Wait till he has finished. Then we'll answer you, Phil," advised Mr. Flood.

"It was her sweetheart, an' she let him in. But she had two sweethearts. The other one she hated an' would have nothing to do with. But this one followed his rival through the woods to the cabin that night an' while the lovers were — were —"

"Spoonin'," suggested Lee Browning.

"Yes; I guess that'll do," assented Don. "While the lovers were spoonin', the bad Indian crept up to the window an' looked in."

“Where does the ghost come in?” exclaimed Billy Beckman.

“He’ll come in all right if you’ll wait,” replied Don. “This is an airship ghost story.”

“Ghosts don’t travel in airships,” objected Billy good-naturedly.

“Indian ghosts do. An’ this Indian ghost was on the lookout for treachery. He was watchin’ the bad Indian, who had a long knife in his hand an’ looked wicked. The ghost didn’t want to commit murder — Indian ghosts never do that — so he decided to scare the bad Indian away. He flew down to the ground, left his aeroplane in the woods — it could sail right through the trees, you know — an’ picked up some stones.”

“Ghosts couldn’t pick up stones,” objected Billy again. He seemed to regard himself as an authority on ghosts.

“Indian ghosts can,” replied Don. “You see, this ghost had been in love with this girl before he was killed.”

“Who killed him?” inquired Bert Foster.

“The Indian at the window. He had it in for every other Indian that liked the girl. Well, the

ghost picked up some stones and began to fire them at the bad Indian at the window."

As Don reached this point in the story, he glanced carelessly at Phil. The latter gave a little start that did not escape Don.

"What did he do that for?" asked some one.

"To scare the bad Indian away," replied Don.

"Did he scare?"

"You bet. The first stone struck near the Indian. But he didn't see anything, because the ghost was standin' behind a tree. He looked around, and then went back to the window. While he was peekin' in again the ghost threw another stone."

Don's audience was now all eagerness. Don hesitated and gazed carelessly toward Phil.

"Did it hit 'im?" inquired one of the boys impatiently.

"No," answered Don slowly: "it didn't hit him. It crashed right through the window!"

Phil gave a real start this time. He was trembling now, but nobody besides Don observed his panic. Julian, too, was wondering at Don's story, but he suspected nothing.

“ Did the stone hit the Indian girl? ” inquired Billy.

“ Yes, but it didn’t hurt her. It fell in her lap, an’ when she picked it up she found it was a great big diamond.”

“ How would an Indian know anything about diamonds? ” asked Bert Foster.

“ These were civilized Indians,” replied Don. “ When the girl an’ her lover got married, it was cut up into a lot o’ stones for rings an’ a necklace.”

“ But no diamonds are found in this country,” objected one of the boys.

“ Oh, yes there are,” said Mr. Flood. “ That ’s a fact that few people know. There are no diamond deposits in the country, so far as is known, but it is on record that more than fifty stones have been found in the Appalachian mountains and near the Great Lakes and in California and Oregon. So Collins is scientific in that respect at least.”

“ What became of the bad Indian an’ the ghost? ” Don was asked.

“ The ghost chased him back home an’ scared

him most to death. He never went near the girl an' her sweetheart again."

"That's a good story," said Mr. Flood. "Now, it's somebody else's turn. Dunbar, can't you tell us a story?"

"No, I don't know any," replied Phil with irritation. His voice was so unnatural that several of the boys looked at him in surprise. They wondered, too, what made his face so pale even in the firelight.

"Did that story scare you, Phil?" asked Billy, laughing. Phil appeared not to hear.

A few more short stories were told and then Mr. Flood announced that it was time to go to bed. Don and Julian slept near each other that night and as they rolled themselves in their light blankets, Julian whispered to his friend:

"Don, where did you get that ghost story you told?"

"Why?" inquired the latter innocently.

"I can't tell you now, but some day I will. An' you'll be surprised when I do."

CHAPTER IX

PHIL'S REVENGE

Next day Don Collins found it necessary to assume a good deal of innocence to dispel the suspicions of Phil Dunbar. He had told his ghost story in a spirit of mischief and had not really wished Phil to suspect the truth. He had no personal fear in telling the story of his night's adventure when he followed Julian and Phil to the distant place in the woods, but he could see no advantage in so doing. Moreover, such a proceeding doubtless would be contrary to the wishes of Julian.

At breakfast Don found Phil's eyes resting on him in a manner full of meaning. But the gaze was returned by Don with such seeming lack of understanding that Dunbar soon was wondering if his suspicions were not unfounded, and based only on a remarkable coincidence. At last he decided that this must be the case and tried to put the matter from his mind.

But in spite of this conclusion Phil determined

to have revenge for the discomfort he had felt. Don must suffer. Dunbar had no idea for some time how he would bring this about but he kept his mind at work and his eyes open. Something usually happened when Phil did that.

Mr. Flood had given the boys instructions to keep together as much as possible during their field work, asking the patrol leaders not to let their commands get scattered. Consequently, the work was done principally in groups of eight with the instructor within calling distance. Each boy had a note book, in which he kept record of his most important observations and the questions he wished to ask later.

Don and Phil of course worked together, being in the same patrol. Julian also was with them. No very definite outline of things to be seen could be mapped on any one day but on this day it was planned to make as much of a study of badgers as possible. Wisconsin is the "Badger State" and has many of those remarkable little animals.

Before they started out from the camp, which was left in charge of a negro servant of the school, Mr. Flood gave ^{the} boys a lecture on the subject of badgers. He told them that the name of the

stout, flat little animal was probably from *badger* because of the white mark like a badge on its head, and that it has many distinct peculiarities. It is usually found in open places, where it burrows into the ground, often enlarging the hole of a gopher for a home. It lives on birds, snakes, gophers, lizards, frogs, insects and the like.

In order to find some badger holes the Boy Scouts walked a mile through the woods until they came to open pasture land. Then they followed the edge of the forest, the several patrols traveling at distances from each other in order that they might move with greater secrecy. They carried their lunches in their knapsacks, intending not to return to camp until evening.

At noon Mr. Flood blew a horn, which was the signal for all to assemble and eat lunch. After this they rested a while and discussed their experiences of the morning and then continued with their play-work. They were now far up the river and directed their course back toward the woods. It was very warm, an unusually hot day for September, and the boys talked wistfully about a plunge in the water. Mr. Flood said nothing on the subject until he reached the cover of the trees

again, and then he said to the half dozen scouts near him:

“ Well, boys, if you want to take a swim, here’s a good place. But you haven’t your bathing suits.”

“ Don’t need any,” replied one.

“ We’ll use our underclothes,” suggested another.

“ All right,” assented the instructor; “ do as you please. I’ll blow the horn and call the other boys.”

Mr. Flood blew a loud blast and soon a score or more of scouts came running toward the spot. In a few minutes all were gathered around the scout master, who informed them that they might go swimming if they wished.

“ But don’t go in over your heads,” he admonished. “ I guess I’ll go in first and see how deep it is.”

This he hastened to do, but the boys did not wait for the results of his inspection of the river before they began to throw off their own clothes. Some of them were even ready for the plunge before Mr. Flood.

Meanwhile, some strange doings were going on

only a short distance back in the woods. Phil Dunbar, unseen by any of his fellow Boy Scouts, had stolen away and was soon hidden from view among the trees and bushes. All day he had been nursing hopes of revenge on Don Collins. He could not tell exactly why he wanted particularly at that time to "get back" at the popular patrol leader, for he had given up the suspicion that Collins had told his ghost story with knowledge of the real window-breaking affair, but the coincidence was so remarkable that he could not help feeling that some one ought to be punished for the discomfort he had suffered.

Phil's plan of revenge was not well defined but such as it was it had suggested itself to him something like this: He would go back a little distance in the woods, undress there, and when all the other boys were in the water he would steal back, leave his own clothes near the others and sneak off with Don's and hide them. This seemed practicable because the bank was high here, sloping back just enough to make it possible for the bathers to scale it. The season had been dry and the water was low in the river bed. Phil hoped, because of the height of the bank, to

be able to carry out his plan without being seen. After hiding Don's clothes, it was his intention to go a little farther upstream and swim down to where the other boys were.

But Phil had not gone far into the woods when a spectacle met his gaze that resulted in an important change in his plan. Through the bushes he saw two pairs of eyes looking at him and the forms of two men crouched in a suspicious manner.

If they had showed any hostile intentions, Phil would have turned and fled. But he knew that he was within calling distance of the bathers, who would run to his assistance at a cry for help. Moreover, he suspected at once that these two men were tramps, and it occurred to him instantly that possibly they might be used in the carrying out of his design. So he stood his ground:

“ Hello,” he said.

“ Hello, kid,” replied one of the men.

“ What you doin' there? ”

“ What business is it o' yourn? ”

“ You're tramps, ain't you? ”

“ Tramps! ” exclaimed the spokesman of the two suspicious characters. “ D'you mean to in-

sult us? We're gentlemen o' leisure, I'd have you know. We're travelin' an' seein' the world."

Here the men stood upright. The spokesman was the taller and heavier, and had a bold, bluffing leer on his face. The other was a little man, with shifting eyes and unintelligent expression. Both were dressed in old, soiled clothing.

"Whatever you are, you were waitin' for a chance to swipe somethin' over there," replied Phil, pointing toward the clothing of the bathers.

"Don't insult us, or we'll put you out o' business," warned the larger man. "We're too well raised to stand for such treatment."

"I'm not insultin' you," replied Phil. "I was intendin' to do somethin' o' the sort myself."

"You was!"

"Yes I was. But mebbe you can save me the trouble. I wanted to hide away the clothes of one of the boys over there 'cause I ain't got any use for him."

"An' you want us to take 'em an' hide 'em, do you?" asked the tall man.

"I don't care what you do with 'em, just so the owner can't find 'em. You can keep 'em if you want to."

“ How big is he? ”

“ Big as me.”

“ Then his clothes’d purty near fit my pal here. Point ’em out to us an’ we’ll take ’em.”

“ I’ll take a stick an’ lay it on ’em,” said Phil.

“ I’m goin’ back now, an’ as soon as I get in the water, you c’n make a dive for the clothes.”

“ All right.”

Phil had now decided that he would undress near the bank, so he started back for the place where all the bathers had disrobed. On his way he picked up a small dead limb and laid it on Don’s clothes, which were lying several yards from the river. If he had seen the covetous glances of the little tramp at the clothes he wore, Phil might have been uneasy and would doubtless have left them nearer the water. But he did just what the tramp wished him to do. He undressed under a tree ten yards from the bank and left his clothes there.

After entering the water, Phil paid no attention to what was taking place ashore. He did not want any suspicion to be directed toward him, so he took part in the sport in a lively manner. In

the midst of a splash-fight with one of the boys, he was thrilled by a cry from Don Collins:

“ Hey! Somebody’s stealin’ our clothes! ”

Phil pretended not to hear and continued to splash, but his opponent called to him to stop.

“ What’s the matter? ” asked Dunbar.

“ Look there! ”

Everybody was swimming ashore now. Two men were making for the woods, each with an armful of clothes. Phil pretended to be excited at the sight and also hastened toward the shore. He scrambled up the bank with threats of vengeance and ran to the spot where he had left his apparel.

It was gone!

Phil staggered back. He could hardly believe his eyes. He looked all around him. He had made no mistake. The clothes were gone.

“ Why, I told them — ”

Don, near by, had slipped on his shirt, trousers and shoes. He looked in surprise at Dunbar as the latter muttered these words. Then Collins turned and ran into the woods with several other pursuers. As he ran he wondered at Phil’s muttered and unfinished remark.

Mr. Flood's clothes had also been stolen. The large tramp evidently had an appreciation of a tailor's fit and selected the only suit that he could wear. One of the larger boys offered his trousers to the instructor, who put them on and ran, a comical looking sight, into the woods. Phil was soon left alone. He had no desire to run after the others, even for appearance sake, and attempt to make his way, naked, through whipping branches and scratching bushes and brush-littered ground unfriendly to bare feet.

Meanwhile the race through the woods was going on with much excitement. Both men had been sighted by the leading pursuers, one of whom was Don Collins. Julian Hartwick was not far behind. Mr. Flood proved to be a good sprinter and was running close to Don. It was evident that they were gaining on the tramps. Presently the larger of the two dropped his armload of clothes and turned to the right. It seemed that he intended to desert his pal after ridding himself of his stolen articles, thereby hoping perhaps to be pursued no farther.

Don was a hardy young fellow, made tough and sinewy by much exercise and outdoor sport, and

it is hardly to be wondered that he outdistanced Mr. Flood in the race. The latter had given up his earlier athletic ambition and had become a man of studious habits. Don was twenty yards ahead of the instructor when the little tramp ahead looked around, and seeing that he was about to be overtaken, dropped Phil Dunbar's clothes.

Collins had no desire for a physical combat with the thief, so he stopped when he came to the clothes and picked them up. Mr. Flood also stopped. Some of the other boys, coming up soon afterward, wished to continue the pursuit and punish the tramps, but Mr. Flood forbade.

"We've got our clothes back and had an exciting adventure; you ought to be satisfied with that," said the instructor.

Then the troupe of half-clothed Boy Scouts went back to the river, and Don returned Phil's clothes to him.

"They made a mistake an' took the wrong pile, didn't they?" he observed.

Phil glanced dangerously at Collins, who looked back innocently at his boy enemy.

Don wondered a little at the angry look and

Phil wondered a good deal at Collins' innocence.

"What do you mean by that?" demanded Dunbar.

"Nothing," replied Don, and he spoke the truth. It would have been hard for him to tell what he meant. Some time afterward when the truth came out, he remembered what he had said on this occasion and was much amused.

Everybody now took another plunge in the river to remove the effect of their race through the woods, and then they returned to camp.

CHAPTER X

RIVER PIRATES

“ Are we safe? ”

“ Yes, I think so.”

“ No sign of life in camp? ”

“ Not a sign.”

“ Shall I start the engine? ”

“ Yes, go ahead. We’re a hundred and fifty yards away and the noise won’t be heard.”

This conversation took place late at night on the Minnehaha, the little steamer belonging to Greenwood Academy. Four Boy Scouts, Phil Dunbar, Stacey Williams, Dick Harding and Tony Eastman, had stolen the boat and were floating down stream, Stacey at the wheel. Dick Harding, just up from the engine room, had opened the conversation with Phil Dunbar. He had taken upon himself the task of running the engine, as he knew more about such work than any of the others. His father was the owner of a steam launch at Buffalo and the boy had learned the operation of such craft on the lake.

Phil and his followers had plotted this escapade on the preceding day. At first they had been somewhat amused with the program of the Boy Scouts but when Mr. Flood, on the second day, forbade the pupils to wantonly kill bird, beast or reptile, these four-of-a-kind plotted to do some scouting of a less peaceful nature.

Phil Dunbar was noted at the school for deeds of cruelty. A few days before, he had caught a snake and a rabbit and had tied the tail of the snake to one of the forefeet of bunny and had set them free. Mr. Flood surprised Phil and Tony Eastman watching the struggling and frightened serpent and hare, and became incensed over the scene. At the next meal time he gave all the boys a lecture on the subject of cruelty to animals. He did not mention the name of the culprit or his companion, but both Phil and Tony took it that the shoes fitted their own feet.

Soon afterward these two much abused young rascals sounded Stacey and Dick on the subject of revenge. These boys were interested at once. Although they were not so cruelly inclined and not especially enthusiastic over the snake-rabbit performance, they were ready to resent any rule laid down by Mr. Flood.

Incident to this suggestion of revenge, Phil's plotting mind conceived a scheme that was doubly enticing. This was that the four boys seize the steamer in which they had come down the river from the academy, and make a trip to where the other members of the Happy Hide-out Club were working on the cave that had been planned a few days before. Thus they would be putting one over on Mr. Flood and at the same time providing themselves with an adventurous means of making a trip to a place that held a strong interest for them.

"How'd you get the boat away without bein' discovered?" asked Tony at once.

"We'd have to wait till the camp's asleep. Then we'd get aboard the steamer and start the fire," replied Phil. "Then we'd cast off and float down stream a couple o' hundred yards before we set the engine goin'. We'd start the propeller and steer back up stream on the other side where the engine would n't wake up anybody in the camp. Comin' back before daylight o' course, we'd slip into the moorin' place with just enough steam to steer. It'll be a great lark with little risk. Anyway, they can't hang us or put us in the pen if we're caught."

“ When do you want to go? ” asked Stacey.

“ To-night.”

“ What time? ”

“ Soon’s ever’body’s got his eyes shut.”

“ How many you want to take along? ”

“ Just us four. Ain’t anybody else here safe.”

“ How about Billy? He’s all right.”

“ I don’t know whether he is, Stace,” replied Phil in an impressive but conciliatory manner. “ I like to favor Beck when I can but I’m kind o’ afraid o’ him of late. I saw him do something funny yesterday. I caught him monkeyin’ with the hats in a sly way at suppertime. And after supper I saw Smarty Collins and Wise-head Hartwick fish some pieces o’ paper out o’ their hats. Some writin’ was on them, too, and I’ve got a sneakin’ notion your cousin tipped off somethin’ to ’em. It looked as if he was doin’ somethin’ he wanted kept secret, too.”

“ That gets me,” exclaimed Stacey as Phil finished. “ I’ll try to find out what he was up to and I’ll bet you’re mistaken. Mebbe he’s tryin’ to play a joke.”

“ All right,” said Phil. “ But you let me know

what you find out. If he wasn't up to any funny business, we'll take him back among us."

"Anyway, we'll be some sleepy-heads to-morrow," announced Dick Harding, reverting to the escapade planned for that night.

"Oh, if we're sleepy to-morrow, we can duck off from the rest of the bunch and snooze a few hours somewhere in the bushes," suggested Phil.

And so the four Boy Scouts took possession of the boat after the rest of the scouts were asleep. A fire was started under the boiler, and as soon as sufficient steam was on, the cable was cast off and the little vessel swung down with the current. Not an eye from the camp followed their actions, for all had been long asleep. Julian Hartwick, however, had departed earlier in the evening, trusting that his absence would not be noticed. He did this in order that he might have a part in an event that was to have an important bearing on the night's experiences and other thrilling adventures soon to follow.

Phil Dunbar had not observed the absence of Julian, so engrossed was he in his own plans for the night. If his attention had been called to the fact that the mysterious boy was not among the

rest of the scouts at bedtime, he doubtless would have halted proceedings for a while, waiting for him to return. He certainly would not have expected Wise-head to set out on another journey like that of two nights before until all in camp were in slumber.

When the Minnehaha started on its trip up stream in the possession of the four boys, Julian was inside the mysterious building in the woods, where some very strange proceedings were going on. Here there were five men and one woman, wife of one of the men, besides the boy from Greenwood. All were in a state of eager excitement. Every person present was in active preparation for a most noteworthy event. After all the preliminaries were completed, a large sliding door at one end of the building was pushed open.

At this moment the Happy Hide-out river pirates who had stolen the Greenwood Academy steamboat were moving up stream past the camp, below which it had drifted. The four boys in it were engaged in the conversation recorded in part at the opening of this chapter.

“ Well, this sure is a lark,” commented Tony enthusiastically. “ Phil you’ve got a head on you

like a tack. We owe you a lot for this peach of a time."

"Then see you pay up, Bone," replied Phil with a grimace at his own humor. Tony was frequently styled "Bonehead" or "Bone" or other similar names by these companions of his who assumed to be smarter than he was. Perhaps "Bone" was a little slow, but, all things considered, he was no fool.

"Now if we don't run aground or onto a snag, we'll be all right," continued Tony apprehensively. Phil interrupted him with:

"There you are, Ivory Top. You're as bad as Bad-egg Beckman. Billy could never keep on the right side o' himself, and your head seems to work like a left-handed monkey wrench. Brace up and be a real tar, for we're pirates now. You'll need your nerve, too, if anything should happen. Keep your nerve in good condition all the time, anyway."

"I wonder what Porkie would say if he saw us now," said Dick Harding, who came up from the engine room at this moment. This was a foolish thing for him to do, as he should have stuck to his post where he could act in case of

emergency. "I'll bet he'd lose that new sweet temper o' his in short order," he added. "It'd make him madder than that beaut of a picture you drew on the blackboard, Dunnie." "Dunnie" was a nickname sometimes applied to Phil.

"I didn't draw it," protested the latter. "Goody-goody Collins drew it."

"Prexy thinks you drew it, anyway," went on Dick. "And to tell the truth, I don't believe Don did it, either. Not that he's too good for such a thing, but he couldn't draw a picture like that to save his right eye. It takes an artist like you, Phil-up."

"Oh, I could have done it all right," boasted Phil with a self-appreciative toss of his head, "and I ain't claimin' I'm too good for such a thing. But I didn't an' I'm dead sure Smart Aleck Collie-dog did it. If he didn't he put some one up to the job. Nobody can convince me I'm wrong. Why Porkie had the same bee in his bonnet when he made Collins rub the picture out. It's easy enough to see that."

The moon had not yet risen but the sky was clear and the stars shone brightly in the darkness. The river was wide and deep and winding,

and picturesquely bordered with rocky bluffs and heavy growths of trees. The boat advanced rapidly up stream, for the boys wished to make quick progress in order that they might spend as much time as possible at the cave.

Suddenly Stacey gave an exclamation of astonishment that caught the attention of Phil and Tony who were near him at the wheel. He had caught sight of something that excited his interest intensely. The other two boys followed his gaze — not along the river ahead or behind, nor to the right or left. He was looking upward at an angle of about forty-five degrees. The first thought of all was that it was a meteor. But this mistake was instantly corrected. What they saw was a very bright light several hundred feet in the air, sweeping around like a flashlight on a man-of-war. Suddenly it was directed toward the river and then settled on the Minnehaha, flooding her deck with light.

The commotion on the boat that followed the appearance of this remarkable light in the air brought Dick Harding to the deck. The question on his lips, however, remained unspoken. His eyes served him just as well as the optics of the

other boys had served them. At this moment all of the boys were thrown to the deck by a violent jar that shook the little vessel from stem to stern. Surprise and astonishment disappeared in a panic of dismay.

CHAPTER XI

THE AIRSHIP SPEAKS

The first thought of the four boy river pirates, as they felt the boat shake violently, was that they were aground. In the excitement caused by the strange searchlight in the air, Stacey had neglected the wheel, although he did not take his hands wholly from it. As the boys gazed upward in amazement, they did not notice where they were going. The vessel swerved to the right and then the prow bumped against a large tree that had fallen into the water and lay partly submerged.

Consternation prevailed. For the moment the strange light in the air was forgotten. What made the situation worse was the fact that the boat did not bound backward after striking, a circumstance that made it appear that she was stuck fast, probably on a shoal. Another fear was that the severe shock had staved in or severely damaged the bow of the stolen craft.

All four scouts rushed forward as soon as they

recovered sufficiently for rational action. As they did so, Tony Eastman cried:

“Now will you call me Ivory Top again? Mebbe you’ll not be in such a hurry to say I’m silly. I told you somethin’ might happen.”

His words were addressed to the leader of the shady expedition. If the situation had not demanded Phil’s attention elsewhere he doubtless would have made some sort of attack on his provoking pal. As it was, he only answered:

“You guinea, you. How could anyone think an airship was goin’ to show up an’ rattle us from steering right? This thing wouldn’t have happened once in a thousand years.”

“An airship!” exclaimed Tony. “You don’t mean to say that was an airship?”

“There you are again, greeny. What’d you think it was? A submarine boat carryin’ a car-load of smearcase to the moon?”

This held Tony for a while, and the inspection into the extent of their mishap was continued. Dick Harding brought a lantern from the cabin. This was swung over the prow to the water’s edge by means of a rope. But no information of value was obtained. Not a sign of the cause of

the bump of the boat could be discerned. While Phil and Tony were fighting out their little battle of words, Dick rushed below and stopped the engine so that it could not drive the little vessel into further trouble.

The examination of the bow of the boat with the aid of the lantern did not even make clear whether that part of the craft had sustained injury. This question being the most important, Phil handed the lantern to Dick and said.

“Here, Hardie, take this and go down in the hold and see if any water is coming in. I’ll try to find what we’re on.”

Dick obeyed the order and Phil found a tent pole of sufficient length to use as a feeler. But he found nothing that either raised his hopes or increased his fears. He was in a state of mind to hear any kind of news from Dick on the latter’s return from the hold.

Dick’s report, however, was cheering. He had been unable to discover a sign of a leak.

“Good,” exclaimed Stacey in a tone of relief. Then Dick continued.

“Let’s see if we can’t work the boat off of whatever it is on. We’ll get a couple more tent

poles and Phil and Tony and I'll push on the log while Dick reverses the engine. There's no tellin' what we may be able to do."

This plan was received with hopeful expressions from the other boys and was soon put into operation. To their great joy the steamer backed off without a scrape or a struggle, indicating that she had really been resting on a shoal. She had run upon a shallow place and was thus prevented from damaging herself hopelessly by striking the tree that lay across her path. Sighs of relief followed this successful labor. It was difficult to decide who of the boys was happiest, unless it was Tony Eastman, whose "I told you so" attitude had made it impossible for him to give his entire attention to self-gratulation.

"It didn't end so bad after all, did it Bone?" said Phil with a chuckle, addressing Tony.

"No," replied the latter, a little crestfallen. "But you needn't act as if you think I'm sorry we got her loose. Why should I want her to stick fast?"

"Oh, I didn't mean you wanted anything of the kind. Only, you could crow a little if things

had come out different. But I'm satisfied and I'm willin' to call you a good fellow just because I'm tickled over our escape."

The little steamer was now moving rapidly up stream again, midway between the banks. Their fright over, the boys began to look again for the airship but not a sign of it was to be found.

"This certainly has been some adventure to-night," declared Stacey after a long search of the darkened sky. "And, believe me, it ain't finished yet. I'll bet there's more comin'."

"I'm dead sure o' that," replied Phil. "I feel it in my bones. That airship sent a hunch through me 'at won't stop hunchin'. My, but did you hear them propellers workin'!"

"Was that noise the propellers?" asked Tony. "I wondered what it was, but didn't think it had anything to do with the light."

"Ivory head again! Of course it was. Didn't you ever see an aeroplane fly and hear the noise when it comes close to the ground? It makes more noise 'an an automobile. There must have been a dozen propellers on the thing that flew over us."

“ Did you get a look at its body? ” broke in Stacey.

“ I didn’t see anything but the light,” said Tony.

“ Well, I did,” exclaimed Phil. “ Bonehead’s eyes were dazzled with the glare. Turn a searchlight on Bone and it’s all off with him. I could see the shape of the ship against the stars. It looked a lot like a cloud.”

The steamer continued its course three or four miles up the river from the camp with no further mishap, and by the time it had reached the vicinity of the cave, the boys had almost forgotten the aerial meteor. They found a mooring place where the bank was about even with the top of the cabin and tied up to a tree that stood near the water’s edge. Then they scrambled ashore and began to make their way toward the spot where the Happy Hide-outers were supposed to be working.

It was about two hundred yards from the boat’s mooring place to the hidden spot on the wooded hill and the four found little difficulty in reaching it. The moon had risen and was pouring a flood of yellow light over the scene,

thus assisting the new arrivals in their progress through the trees and bushes.

They reached the hill without seeing or hearing any signs of the boys supposed to be working hard with pick and shovel halfway up the slope. But they had not ascended far when they heard voices. This hastened their steps and pretty soon they joined a party of welcoming fellow Hide-outers.

There were five workers at the place, the leader of whom was Percy Little, a lad energetic in all things except where he should have been. Under his leadership considerable progress had been made, for a good-sized hole already appeared in the side of the hill.

“You’ll have to be doin’ somethin’ to brace the top,” observed Stacey Williams, greetings over. Stacey was gifted with a somewhat level head. “You’ll have a cave-in if you don’t. This is all loose dirt. And it’s a good thing, too, as it makes the work easy. But my advice is to stop digging and to cut some timbers to make the cave safe as far as you have gone.”

“That’s right, Perce,” added Phil. “You want to look out for anything o’ that sort. We

can't afford to run the risk o' anybody bein' killed. Better stop diggin' right away.'"

This recommendation was adopted and the two axes that had been brought with the other tools were laid to the task of cutting saplings to brace the walls and top of the cave. This was no small labor, for few of the boys had had much experience in carpentry. But they finally managed to devise a system of braces that was safe and satisfactory.

The cave thus far, was about twelve feet wide, six feet high, and six feet deep. They planned to dig inward nine feet further and then to make a wall in the front with tree trunks planted upright in palisade fashion, leaving open spaces for an entrance and one window. Other small openings for ventilation and a chimney were also to be provided.

Necessarily the work of making the ceiling and walls safe advanced slowly. In fact, little progress had been made when there was an interruption of a startling nature. It was hardly surprising to Phil, but astonishing to Stacey and Dick and Tony. It was even more alarming to the other division of the Happy Hide-outers.

The reason for this difference of effects was this:

The mysterious searchlight of the airship that had so startled the river pirates earlier in the night, was shining again. Glowing like a powerful bull's-eye, but not casting a long path of light because the moon was now illuminating the sky, it was passing over the hill. The aeroplane could be seen quite plainly now, two hundred feet from the ground. It was a sight to mystify even in the poor light afforded by the moon, for it now had the appearance of a real craft of the air. All were instantly certain that it was not a dirigible balloon. Yet no one could form a clear idea as to its locomotion except by the noise of what seemed to be rapidly whirling propellers.

The vessel was almost stationary in the air about a hundred yards to the southeast. Of course, its possible occupants could not be seen at such a distance and in the semi-darkness. But it was evident that human hands were directing the rays of the searchlight for the purpose of attracting the attention of the cave diggers. Presently the big black thing moved to-

ward the boys and soon hovered directly over them. Then an object about the size of one's fist was dropped in their midst, and the strange craft moved away.

Phil Dunbar picked up this object and hastened to a lantern standing near by on the ground. The other boys crowded around him as he examined the thing, which proved to be a wad of paper shaped in the form of a ball and held by twine wound around it. But this was not the most curious feature. Attached to the improvised ball was a piece of paper, folded and held fast under more windings of cord.

Phil removed the paper and unfolded it.

“ A note — there's writing on it! ”

Then he read to himself, while everybody else present held his breath in expectation. Suddenly Phil exclaimed:

“ Good Gracious, fellows! How in the world could he ever get up there? Collie-dog Collins is on that airship! ”

CHAPTER XII

WHY THE AIRSHIP SPOKE

It was eleven o'clock the same night and all was slumbering silence in the camp of the Boy Scouts by the river. The moon had not yet risen and the darkness was intense within the woods. Suddenly, out from the blackness stole the form of a boy who moved as if he was wholly familiar with the place. The form advanced in an upright posture with no attempt at concealment. He trod softly and with the evident purpose of disturbing no one, hurrying through the camp toward the river. As he reached the farther edge of the clearing occupied by the sleepers, he stooped over the motionless form of Don Collins and began gently to shake him.

But Don did not awaken easily. He was a sleeper who seldom dreamed of ghosts or burglars or things scary. Consequently his disturber found it necessary to persist in the shaking before the slumbering scout opened his eyes.

Fortunately Don was not easily startled. He

did not cry out when he found himself being aroused in this mysterious manner. Moreover, he listened very calmly to the words that were whispered to him by the other boy.

“Keep still, Don. This is Jule. Get up and follow me. Be as still as you can.”

Perhaps Don would have demanded an explanation if it had not been for the fact that he knew more about Julian Hartwick than that boy suspected. This knowledge was enough to make such mysterious proceedings seem natural. Don, who long had regarded Julian as the boy of mystery, as had every other boy in the Academy, was now prepared for some explanation. The strange manner in which Julian was acting suggested this.

He followed Julian from the camp to the bank of the river, and there, at the suggestion of Julian, they halted.

“What do you think of that?” began Julian pointing to the river.

“Why the steamer’s gone!” exclaimed Don, rubbing his eyes as if to get the last of the sleep out of them. “What’s it mean?”

“Stolen,” replied Julian.

“ Who did it? ”

“ Phil Dunbar, Dick Harding, Stacey Williams and Tony Eastman.”

“ How d’you know? ”

“ I saw ’em.”

“ You saw ’em steal the boat? ”

“ No. But I saw ’em on the boat after it was stolen.”

“ How long ago? ”

“ Half an hour.”

“ But the moon wasn’t up. How could you see ’em from the bank? ”

“ I wasn’t on the bank.”

“ You weren’t? ” went on Don with a puzzled look. “ Were you on the steamer? ”

“ No,” answered Julian, evidently enjoying the mystery.

“ On another boat then, of course.”

“ No.”

Don looked at Julian as if he would like to inquire into the condition of the latter’s mind. Not on the bank, not on the steamer nor on another boat! Where could he have been? Then another question occurred to him.

“ Mebbe you were up a tree or swimmin’.”

“Neither,” replied Julian chuckling. “But come on down here an’ I’ll give you the explanation. You’ll understand better than if I take an hour to explain.”

Don followed Julian through the timber along the river. Presently they came to another clearing.

“What in the world’s that?” exclaimed the astonished Don as they neared a big skeleton-like object. Then, for the first time in his life, Don found himself within examining distance of an airship. And, although he did not know it then, he was also confronting a type of airship such as no one but the secret workers in the woods had ever seen, the helicopter—the gliding aeroplane that has since attracted so much attention.

The aviation world—and Frenchmen particularly—have dreamed of a quick-ascending airship since man-flight began. The first ascent of aeroplanes by weights, pulleys and tracks, all flying men conceded to be the groping of a beginner. Then the quick run on wheels over smooth ground or grass marked an advance. Succeeding this came the flight to shorten the

run on the ground. To ascend or land an airship within a few feet was one of the steps needed before a flying machine could ever be counted among practical inventions.

This important advance had been made in the rude structure in the woods. The men at work there had elaborated the lifting propellers of the French helicopter and combined them with the forward thrust of the ordinary propeller. Before these two boys lay a machine, the only one of the kind in the world, in which flat, fan-like, horizontal wheels (all above the body of the airship) had at last been made to elevate the car directly from the ground without a run. Working with these were other vertical propellers which at the proper time took up the work of the horizontal wheels and shot the car forward in the air.

The outlines of the marvelous airship, seen but vaguely in the night, indicated a vehicle about fifty feet wide and ninety feet long, resembling, in general, the body and wings of a "snake feeder." The wings or planes were six in number, three attached to each side, one behind the other and made fast separately, each

succeeding plane a little lower than the one in front.

The section to which the planes were attached was oval in shape, about eight feet in height, the same in width and perhaps thirty feet long, ending in the rear in a truss framework that extended sixty feet farther, ending in two sail-like, canvas horizontal and vertical rudders. To the front of the oval form or car was attached a twelve-foot vertical propeller, and in the two feet of the rounded front left exposed above the arms, glinted the glass of two circular lookout windows.

A framework of a new alloy of steel, a new metal not even named as yet, as Don learned later, extended right and left from the shaft of the main vertical propeller. At the ends of this frame were set smaller propellers connected with the main propeller shaft by chain drives. These two propellers were in line with the front planes.

About twenty feet from the rear end of the oval body of the curious contrivance — public knowledge of which was soon to set the aviation world agog — another horizontal plane extended

from each side of the truss frame a distance of about fifteen feet on each side. As is now known by all in touch with the newest in aeroplane improvements, the six main body planes or wings were adjustable and could be carried horizontally or turned vertically.

"What're the umbrellas?" whispered Don to Julian.

"They've got a French name I can't remember," answered Julian. "All I can tell you is they're the lifters. That's why she can shoot straight up among all these trees and drop down again without runnin' from here to Guinea."

These were the helicopter horizontal fans, six in number and extending in a line from the front of the body part way out on the truss. Under these air-sucking fans ran a little deck enclosed by a light, high network railing which gave this part of the structure the appearance of a steamer's bridge. Within was a pilot room or cabin. Behind this came the engine room, practically the same compartment and, aft of this, a small room—a section apparently meant for a store or sleeping room.

"It's steel," went on Don as his composure began to return to him.

"Nope," answered Julian, "but it's a steel alloy; it's metal anyway.

The dark, rounded sides stood out like the frame of a yacht. In the side nearest Don and Julian was a window. But the shade was drawn, so that although tiny rays of light stole out here and there, giving evidence that the interior was well lighted, the boys could not look within.

"Can't you make out what it is?" inquired Julian with a smile.

"It must be an airship," exclaimed the astonished Don, his voice marked with incredulity.

"And that's what it is. Come in and see how you like it."

Julian led the way up half a dozen steps and through the easily opened door. As Don laid his hand on the handrail of the steps, he felt a strange thrill.

"I wonder if I'm about to meet some new Captain Nemo," thought the boy as he ascended with the sensation of one about to enter into a place of enchantment.

Don was conducted first into the cabin. It had a table fastened to the floor, several chairs and other minor articles of furniture and con-

venience. By the table was seated a young man and a young woman, neither of them more than thirty years old. Both arose to greet the two boys.

“Don,” began Julian. “I want to introduce you to my brother and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Harry Hartwick. Harry and Nora, this is my friend Don Collins.”

Mr. and Mrs. Hartwick welcomed Don cordially. Then came the revelation and the knowledge of Julian’s mystery. The latter informed his friend that his brother was the designer and builder of the craft, and began some account of the invention and its features and improvements. In the engine room Don met the engineer and another man who had helped with the mechanical construction of the vessel.

Almost the entire structural material of the ship was metal. The engine was run by gasoline, and connected with it was a motor that generated the current for lighting the boat.

“Where was it built?” inquired the almost stupified Don after they had returned to the cabin.

“Not very far from here,” replied Julian with a grin.

“In a barn-like building in the timber about two miles away?” asked Don significantly.

“How’d you know that?” exclaimed Julian, whose turn it now was to be astonished.

“Oh, you’re not the only wise fellow at Greenwood,” Don laughed. “You mustn’t think you could keep your night journeys through the timber secret. I’ve had you under suspicion for some time. There are people, let me tell you, who always have their eyes open. Perhaps you haven’t forgotten the stone that flew through the window — ”

“Don Collins!” cried Julian. “What do you know about that?”

Mr. and Mrs. Hartwick were listening with much interest. When Don made mention of the window breaking episode, they both appeared astonished.

“Well, I threw the stone,” confessed Don.

“You did?”

The chorus in which these two words were uttered was perfect.

“ Yes, I did,” replied Don. “ But it was to help you, Jule.”

“ To help me!” cried the latter. “ How? You almost hit me on the head.”

“ I’m sorry about that and I’m glad that I missed you. The fact is, I hadn’t any intention of throwing the stone through the glass at all. I only wanted to scare a fellow who was watching you through the window.”

“ Who was it? ”

“ Phil Dunbar.”

Don now began at the beginning and recited the experiences of that night. A more surprised trio than his audience could hardly be imagined. They plied him with questions and when all had been answered they could only thank him for what he had done.

Soon after the conclusion of this talk Don felt the airship tremble, while a series of muffled explosions sounded on the air. Then he noticed that Julian’s brother was not in the cabin.

“ Are we flying? ” inquired Don as he thought he felt the ship rise.

“ That’s what we’re doing,” chuckled Ju-

lian. "Here, look out and see. The moon's rising now and it's light out."

He lifted the shade of the window as he spoke and Don peered out. It looked to him as if the earth was dropping swiftly away from them. They were already several hundred feet in the air. Presently the upward motion ceased and the vessel instantly shot forward like an arrow.

"Where are we goin'?" asked Don apprehensively.

"After the river pirates," replied Julian.

"The river pirates?"

"Yes — Phil Dunbar and his crowd. They stole the steamer, you know. Now I'll tell where I was when I saw them on the steamer. But you can guess, I reckon."

"Yes," answered Don. "But how could you have seen them even from the airship, before the moon rose?"

"We used the searchlight. We gave 'em one fright and now we're going to give 'em another. Get your wits together and help us give 'em a good scare."

"But where are they?"

"Somewhere up the river. We must find 'em."

The airship followed the stream upward and all eyes were kept on the lookout for the Minnehaha. After a long search the steamer was located at the place where she had been moored by Phil and his three pirate followers.

"She seems to be deserted," reported Don. "I wonder where the scamps are."

The sound of chopping on the hill where the work of bracing the hide-out was being prosecuted, answered this question. In a short time the "Nora," as the airship had been called for the wife of the inventor and builder, was directly over the rebels and settling toward them.

Meanwhile Don's wits had not been idle. Finding a newspaper in the cabin, he wadded part of it into a ball and wound about it sufficient string to hold it in shape. Then upon a piece of paper he wrote these words of warning.

"Look out, Phil-up Dunbar. The mysterious boy you followed through the woods is after you on wings. So is the fellow who threw the stone through the window. Quit this rebel business. Go back to Prexie Porky and confess. Maybe he will forgive you. If you don't, look out for something from the sky.

"D. C."

“ There, I think that’ll give him his *fill up* of scare,” said Don to Julian as he fastened the note to the ball. Then he dropped it into the midst of the cave diggers below.

CHAPTER XIII

EXPLAIN OR FIGHT

Phil stood holding in his hand the message he had received from the sky. A gasp of amazement followed his declaration that Don Collins was in the airship.

“Yes, and Hungry Hartwick is up there, too.”

Julian was not a hungry looking boy. There was nothing poverty-stricken in his appearance except his clothes. He ate at the same table with boys who had more spending money than common sense. But his clothes were of second-rate or even third-rate quality, a fact that caused Phil Dunbar to associate with this boy a hungry aspect.

“Phil, are you crazy?” Hard-headed, unimaginative Dick Harding threw this question at the leader of the Happy Hide-outers.

“No, Hardie, I ’m not crazy,” exclaimed Phil. “I’m just as sane as you ever were. Collie-dog and Hungry are on board that airship.”

"But we left 'em in camp."

"Did we? How do you know? Did you see 'em as we came away?"

"No, I didn't," admitted Dick.

"Mebbe they weren't there at all," suggested Phil. "Mebbe they left early in the evening. How about it, Stace and Tony? Did either o' you see Smarty or Hungry just before we left camp?"

"I saw Collie-dog," answered Stacey. "I passed close to him when we left. He was asleep, I'm sure."

Phil's confidence was somewhat shaken by this statement.

"Well," he faltered; "what do you think o' this then?"

Several of the boys had impatiently urged Phil to reveal the contents of the note while he was engaged in this conversation, but he stood them off. Now, however, he read aloud the missive from the sky.

"There," he concluded with renewed conviction, "I know Hungry is on that airship, for he's the fellow I followed through the woods night before last. I'm almost as certain

Smarty's there, too, for here are his initials, 'D. C.' "

"Yes, but 'D. C.' stands for Dennis Callahan or any other name in or outside the dictionary," laughed Dick.

"Is there anybody else in camp whose initials are 'D. C.'?" insisted Phil.

Nobody present was able to recall a boy among all the Boy Scout campers with these initials. Phil went on:

"Then I say that 'D. C.' or Don Collins, is on the airship. He said he followed me while I was chasin' Wise-head through the woods. It couldn't be anyone else, since it must have been some one from the camp."

The logic of Phil's argument seemed unanswerable. Anyway, nobody offered another explanation, although most of the boys were inclined to shake their heads over the mysterious affair. Phil was asked for a more detailed account of his experiences two nights before when he followed Julian to the hidden place in the woods. This he gave, to the entertainment and wonder of all present.

In spite of his many faults, Phil was a cour-

ageous fellow. When he said that he was not afraid of "Smarty" Collins he meant it, as he cordially hated Don. He longed for the time when he might put his and "Smarty's" physical strength to a test. He confidently believed that he would be able to prove his own superiority.

Therefore, when some of the boys desired to know what Phil proposed to do in reply to the warning from the sky, he replied:

"Just what I've planned from the first, if you fellows will stick by me. If Collie-dog tries any funny business, he'll have to settle with me."

"But suppose Collie or Church-mouse Hartwick peaches to Prexy—what then?" asked Stacey. "Punchin' them won't help matters."

"Well, if either of 'em peaches," exclaimed Phil, "I'll have my revenge for that. In the meantime, I'm goin' to answer the note that Smarty dropped from the airship. I'm goin' to make him show his hand. I'm goin' to have somethin' to say about a fellow who's afraid to sign his name to anything written by himself."

"You didn't sign your name to that picture on the blackboard," suggested Tony Eastman boldly.

"No, because I didn't draw it. And this note from Smarty in the sky is another proof to me that he drew it. He's afraid to put his name to anything. When he gets married he'll want his wife to take his initials and be satisfied with 'em.'"

This sally from Phil on the subject of matrimony produced general laughter. But no one attempted to add to the witticism.

By this time the airship had disappeared in the southeast. The boys now took up their work again and continued it until half past two o'clock, when it was decided to return to the camp.

Phil and his three boat companions went back to the river, got up steam quickly and were soon cutting through the water down stream. As they neared the camp the power was shut off, thus reducing the noise made by the little vessel, and it ran quietly into the mooring place.

After tying the boat fast to a tree on the bank, the boys went ashore and stole back to their open-air bunks. As they moved among the sleepers, they made a search for Don and Julian and were rewarded by finding both boys ap-

parently fast asleep. There was nothing to indicate that they had been absent in the course of the night.

Phil was somewhat taken aback by this discovery but the evidence of the note dropped from the airship could not be disregarded. He merely shook his head in a puzzled manner. Nevertheless, he did not abandon his earlier determination to issue some sort of challenge to Don because of the note the much-hated boy had written. Pretty soon, however, Phil and his companions were fast asleep.

The Nora wandered about very little after leaving the working place of the rebel Boy Scouts. She was soon headed directly for the camp where Don and Julian should have been soundly sleeping. On the way Julian explained to Don that this was the second trip the airship had made. In fact it had been completed the very night when Don drove Phil Dunbar away from the shop by sending a stone through the window.

"We made a short trip about two o'clock in the morning after we were sure that the person who disturbed us had gone away," explained Julian.

All of the night wanderers slept soundly until sunup, for Mr. Flood was not disposed to enforce strictly the "early to bed and early to rise" adage. He assumed that all were tired after their activities of the day before and decided to let them have all the rest they wanted. This day was the last of the outing for the four patrols and in the afternoon all boarded the steamer and returned to Greenwood. Meanwhile Don watched Phil on the sly with feelings of some amusement, and Phil kept an eye on Don with feelings quite the opposite.

Phil would have liked to say something to "Smarty" on the subject of the note dropped from the airship but he found no opportunity before the return to the academy. In fact Don avoided such a conversation, since his reason for writing the message was principally humorous. He had in mind no plan of interfering with the doings of the young rebels, for he really regarded their activities as none of his business. Indeed, if the president of the school had questioned him closely on the subject, Don probably would have answered evasively as long as possible. If driven into a corner, it is likely he

would have refused to make reply. Such was his boy sense of honor.

But Phil was not to be balked permanently in his purpose. He continued to watch for an opportunity and that evening after supper, as Don was crossing the campus on his way from the dining hall to the library, Phil followed "Smarty Collie" and accosted him in a dark place.

"Hold on there, Big Head, I want to talk to you," he began.

"All right, Phil-up," replied Don good-naturedly. "But I'm surprised at this unexpected honor."

"No taffy to-night, Mr. Bum Wit. I mean business."

"So do I—always. What's your business with me?"

Don's manner was cool and he showed no signs of fear, but this did not trouble Dunbar. He knew Don was a strong boy but was confident of his ability to thrash him, in spite of the remarkable stories told by the latter's admiring friends. Both boys were about the same age and size and well built.

"This is my business with you," went on Phil. "I want to know if you're such a coward that you're afraid to sign your name to the note you wrote to me?"

"Not at all, Phil-up. Who filled you up on such dope? When did I write a note to you?"

"You're a liar," was the only answer.

"Oh, my, Phil, don't get excited. How can you call me a liar when I haven't even denied writin' a note?"

"You're a liar," persisted Phil.

"Come, come, Phil-up. Are you off your nut?"

"No I ain't. I say you're a liar. I mean it. You're actin' a lie and that's just the same. You're pretendin' that you didn't write the note. That's lyin' if I knew anythin' about it."

"Didn't you ever tell a lie?"

"That's none o' your business. What I want to know is what you meant by that threat you made in your note. You told me to look out for somethin' from the sky."

"I meant the day of judgment."

"You're a liar again. Now, you've got to explain that threat or fight. Mebbe you'll have to fight anyway."

CHAPTER XIV

THE FIGHT AND THE ACCUSATION

“ All right, Mr. Dunbar. If I have to fight I s’pose I have to. But you’ll have to strike the first blow and make it hurt too. And not only that, you’ll have to make me believe you’re goin’ to give me more. You can hit me once, pretty hard. Even then I won’t fight ’less it hurts me too much. So go ahead and hit anywhere, except in the face. You can’t hit me there.”

Phil was too much enraged to regard with wonder this remarkable speech of Don’s. It should have served as warning. Doubtless it would thus have served a cooler-headed boy. But instead of taking heed, Phil struck out with his right fist, using all the steam at his command. He aimed his blow for Don’s nose.

He almost fell over. Don told the truth when he said Phil could not hit him in the face. The blow unexpectedly meeting no resistance, its force carried the would-be exponent of a knock-

out several feet forward before he could catch himself. When Phil recovered his balance he found "Collie" watching him gravely.

"You'd better take my advice," said Don.
"If you hadn't tried to hit me in the face —"

"You're a coward!" interrupted Phil scornfully.

"No, I'm a peace scout."

"You're a fool."

"Your opinion don't bother me much."

"You're an idiot."

"Then you're a fool for givin' me so much time if I ain't responsible for what I say or do."

"You've got sense enough to know you're a fool."

"Mebbe, but that's more than I can say for you, Phil."

"Don't call me Phil."

"What'll I call you? Phil-up? You seem to be full-up o' somethin'."

"Do you mean I'm drunk?"

"Don't take me too seriously, Phil — I mean Phil-up."

"No, you are right there. You're a fool. You ain't responsible. I want to know what you

meant by the note you dropped from the airship."

"Wasn't it plain?"

"Plain enough. But you told me to confess to Porkie or look out for somethin' from the sky. What'd you mean by that?"

"Didn't you ever hear of thunder out of a clear sky? I might've meant to look for somethin' not expected, somethin' that'll come as a great surprise."

"You mean you're goin' to peach to Porkie, you sneakin' Smart Aleck. And I'm out here right now to give you the worst lickin' you ever had. Then you'll know enough to keep your mouth shut and mind your own business. Take off your coat and get ready. I'm not goin' to wait long."

"I ain't goin' to take my coat off, Phil-up," replied Don. "A little thing like that won't bother me. But I'm afraid you'll be sorry. I wish you wouldn't try."

"Hurry up and get ready," interrupted Phil contemptuously. "I'm in a hurry to get through with the job."

"Why not finish before you begin?"

“ Are you ready? ”

“ I’ve been ready ever since you stopped me. But I’m afraid you ain’t. Take my advice and go into trainin’ before you start anything with me, Phil-up — ”

Don got no further with his advice. Phil came at him full tilt, fists clenched, teeth set and his whole attitude that of a bull making for a horse in a Mexican arena.

But the “ horse ” in this instance proved pretty agile. Don sidestepped quickly and in some manner unnoted by his antagonist, his right foot became entangled with Battling Dunbar’s legs. Phil went sprawling, his nose ploughing a furrow in the sod. It was a hard fall and the unfortunate Phil was momentarily stunned. Don stood by and watched him, questioning whether he ought to remain for further developments. He looked around to see if anybody was approaching but detected no sign of an onlooker. Before he fully decided what to do, Phil was on his feet again and manifesting dangerous intentions.

He came at the hated Don with all the ferocity of his first onset. The shock of his fall had un-

settled him somewhat, rendering him even wilder in his movements, and Don found it easier to repeat the upsetting operation. This time Phil's head struck the ground in such a manner and with such force that he lay still. Don had not struck a blow and his enemy lay apparently vanquished. It was Phil's violence that had reacted upon himself and proved his undoing. The "peace scout" had merely used a little skill and virtually turned his foe's attack upon himself.

At once Don became frightened over the still form before him. Had he dangerously injured Phil? The seriousness of such a possibility caused the cold sweat to come out over his body. He leaned over the motionless form. Phil's face, upturned, looked pale even in the darkness. Don's fears may have caused him to imagine it paler than it really was. He knew he could make certain if his defeated enemy were alive or dead by feeling of his face and hands.

But he could not force himself to make the test. The fear that he might find evidence of death in his now still foe chilled him through and held him powerless. If he could only bring

back consciousness to the still form. He felt he had been too sarcastic in his replies to Phil's taunts. He realized he had goaded Phil on to the attack. He knew from the first that he had nothing to fear from Phil in a fair encounter. Phil should have been convinced of this had he known some of Don's history as an athlete. The latter could have told how in his earlier school days he had been the leader in every boyish sport; that he had been the best wrestler among all his associates, some of them two or three years his senior; he could have told how his father, now dead for two years, had taken him in hand at an early age and trained him so carefully that he gave every promise of being a powerful man.

As for Phil, he had a naturally good physique but little physical training. He was a strong boy and he could have been trained into a good athlete. But thus far his training had been all his own and in accord with the caprices of a vainglorious and hot headed disposition. Consequently he could not last long in a set-to with Collins.

Don did not think of all this as he stood

over his enemy. He had no time. Presently his moral obligation to do all he could for the weak and injured caused him to drop on his knees and examine the seemingly lifeless body before him. He compressed his lips with determination, resolved to face the worst, and put one hand on the still, white face. It was warm. He put his hand over Phil's heart and felt a fluttering there.

The uncertainness of this, however, brought back his fears. Was not life departing with a struggle? The mere suggestion of this caused Don to lose control of his emotions and to put his hands to his face with a groan.

"Collins, what does this mean?"

It was the voice of President Bacon that interrupted Don's lamentation. The terrified boy sprang to his feet and faced the condemning look of the master of Greenwood. Conscious of no wrongful intent, however, he partly recovered with an effort and replied:

"I'm afraid he's hurt, sir. Don't stop to punish me. Let's do somethin' to save him. Please, please do somethin' before it's too late."

President Bacon gave a few nods of his head

as if to say, "You never can tell what will happen when boys become jealous of each other," and then ordered Don to assist him to remove Phil to the president's home.

They lifted the limp form and bore it with some difficulty along the dark and now lonely driveway for about a hundred yards to the home of the president. Arrived there, they entered and laid their burden upon a couch. Then President Bacon telephoned for a doctor. Before the arrival of the physician, the master and his wife worked over the injured boy, but without success.

Dr. Bowen arrived in a short time and examined the patient. Meanwhile Don stood by watching the proceedings nervously, and eagerly hoping that he might be asked to do something. Presently the doctor looked up and asked.

"How did this happen?"

"I don't know," was President Bacon's reply. "I haven't had time to find out." Then he looked inquiringly at Don.

"I'll tell you," exclaimed the latter stepping forward. "Phil and I have never been very good friends and we had a little mix-up to-night.

He — that is, we had a scuffle and I tripped him up. In falling, he must have struck his head on the ground pretty hard, or a stone mebbe — I didn't examine the place. But, Doctor, tell me how he is. Will he get well? "

" Remarkably hard," said Dr. Bowen, referring to the fall and ignoring Don's petition. " It hardly seems to me that a fall of that nature could have produced so serious a result."

The doctor continued his examination and eventually announced signs of success. Don was asked to leave the room, inasmuch as his presence might excite Phil on the latter's return to consciousness. He did as requested, going out upon the campus, where he lay down upon the grass and spent a period of very hard and uncomfortable thinking. Finally he went back to the president's house, inquired as to Phil's condition and found that he was resting easily and was not considered seriously injured. Then he went to the dormitory and to bed, where he did not fall asleep until midnight.

Next morning a surprise was in store for him. And it was not an agreeable surprise. President Bacon sent for him to appear in the school o'-

fice immediately after breakfast. Don obeyed the summons with no little apprehension. What could it mean? Had Phil's condition become more serious? Or — fearful thought — had he died? The latter solution seemed even more probable than the former, for the mere fact of the injured boy's condition becoming more serious could hardly be a reason for summoning the author of the injury into the president's office. His death would be a very good reason for such action.

Don walked slowly to the office of the master of Greenwood and knocked at the door with quite the opposite of boldness. He was admitted. President Bacon was alone. The boy looked anxiously into the master's face for some sign of the reason of his summons but, although the master's countenance was stern, no indication of what was going on in his mind was to be discovered.

“How — how is Phil?” faltered Don. The reply that came proved a great relief, although it was followed by another statement of a puzzling nature.

“Oh, Dunbar is gettin' along all right. He's

even able to walk around this morning, I'm glad to say. But he has made a most serious charge against you, Collins. This, together with your nervousness of last evening, makes things look bad."

"A charge against me!" exclaimed Don. "What charge could he make against me?"

"Just this," said the master sternly, and it was evident that he believed at least some of Phil's story; "he says you crept up behind him in the dark and struck him on the head with a club. Now, Collins, what have you to say?"

CHAPTER XV

THE MYSTERY OF THE AIRSHIP

If Don Collins himself had been struck a blow on the head with a club, he could hardly have been more astonished than he was at the charge made by Phil Dunbar. The audacity of the latter took the wind out of his sails, as it were. For a few moments he stood without speech. And his attitude did not help him in the eyes of the head official of the school, for the latter misunderstood it, interpreting his confusion as an indication of guilt. Moreover, Phil had told a plausible story, for he was an adept at this sort of thing.

“Come now, Collins, make a full confession. Your punishment may not be so hard,” resumed the president. “If you lie to me I shall have to suspend you. Otherwise, I may be able to find some other punishment that will not interfere with your work here.”

“I’m not goin’ to lie to you,” protested Don indignantly. “I’m goin’ to tell you the truth. I

deny absolutely what Phil says. I was crossin' the campus, goin' to the library. Phil came up and wanted to know what I meant by a note I wrote to him as a joke. We had some words and he jumped me. I tripped him twice. The second time he fell hard, striking his head on the ground. He didn't get up and I was afraid I'd killed him."

"But you were in a good deal of distress for one who was no more to blame than you would have been under such circumstances," replied the president, eyeing Don keenly.

"I don't think so. Nobody wants to hurt anyone, even an enemy, even if it is an accident or in self-defense."

"Well, I've been told two different stories regarding this affair. It is evident one or the other of you has been misrepresenting things grossly. I'll look into the matter carefully. Meanwhile you may continue with your classes pending the investigation."

Phil's injuries fortunately proved not to be serious. He did not appear in his classes for three days, however, and the report was circulated that he was ill. But he did not choose to

let this report suffice as an explanation of his absence from class. On the second day he told Stacey Williams the story that he had told to President Bacon regarding the manner in which he had received his injury.

This account of the affair was artfully presented. Phil did not directly accuse Don of striking him with a club, but he said he was crossing the campus when he heard a step behind him and was about to turn to see who was approaching when a heavy blow fell suddenly upon his head. This fabrication he followed with a true report of the manner in which "Prexy" had found Collins standing over him, frightened at what he had done.

With many this story had the desired effect. Don soon found himself the object of sneering remarks and contemptuous treatment from some of his fellow students. Others avoided him even more significantly, and life at the academy for a time was made wretched for him. It was a punishment hard to bear for one who could not but feel that he was undeserving of serious blame. It was true that he felt some remorse at first because he had met Phil's insulting remarks

in a joking manner. But the false accusation made against him by the latter killed much of this and caused him to speak out boldly for himself. This had good results in many instances.

Don had one friend who stood by him in this trying situation. This friend was Julian Hartwick, who understood Phil's nature well enough and did not doubt the story told by Collins. Julian did his best to cheer Don, telling him that he ought not worry, since the true facts were bound to come out in time.

Don did his best to appear cheerful and not notice the slights of many whom he had previously considered his friends. Several days passed but he heard nothing from the president. Some of those who had been doubting him began to show a disposition to give him fair play, asking him for his side of the story. He tried to avoid discussing it and his unassuming manner told much in his favor.

"There is no use talking about the matter," he told some of the boys. "Appearances are against me but my history at this school ought to tell you I wouldn't do such a thing."

"Yes," replied one of his friends, "and Phil

Dunbar's history don't speak much in his favor. I'm not goin' to believe you acted such a coward. Anyway, I believe you could lick Phil in a fair fight. You wouldn't have to take so mean an advantage of him."

Meanwhile Phil Dunbar was not idle. He and his Happy Hide-out friends continued to work in nightly shifts at the cave by the river. In the course of about two weeks they completed their home in the hill. And it really was a creditable performance from the standpoint of mechanical execution. The hardest part of the work was the bracing of the roof so as to prevent a cave-in. It took all their carpentering skill, but when they had finished, it looked safe and substantial.

Neither Don or Julian said anything to their schoolmates about the secret activities of the Dunbarites. They had a sense of boy honor which prohibited "peaching" on the other boys, especially when it was meddling in business not their own. Nobody seemed in physical danger and Don and Julian had no desire to face such sneering remarks as "Tattle-tale" or "Prexy's Pet."

Nor did Phil, or any of his followers, carry to the president or member of the faculty, any in-

formation regarding Don's and Julian's connection with the airship. True, they did considerable talking among themselves on the subject, for it afforded a matter of no little wonder among them. But they had no desire to make heroes of the two boys whom they disliked cordially, and to circulate the story of the two chums' flight in the air would result in the very thing that they desired most to avoid. It was at Phil's suggestion that he and his friends kept this information as close a secret as possible.

However, vague rumors of the strange affair spread among the boys of the school. They were generally laughed at, so ridiculous did they seem. Julian appeared to have some reason for wishing to keep an air of mystery about the matter and Don was too good a friend of his to act contrary to his wishes.

But the presence of an airship in the neighborhood could not long be kept secret when its owner and operator chose to fly on occasions and in a manner that would attract attention. It was never seen in the daytime. But frequently at night its searchlights, one on each side and sweeping with penetrating glare through the dark atmosphere,

caused imaginative beholders to wonder if a resurrected Captain Kidd had not transferred his roving activities from the sea to the air. One night the vessel appeared over the city near Greenwood and after entertaining the citizens with a display of the searchlights in varying colors, suddenly burst forth with a grand exhibition of fireworks such as few denizens of the place had ever seen. Then it disappeared.

Of course this remarkable apparition and display at once became the talk of the community and a subject of interest for the whole country. Newspapers devoted columns to the mysterious visitor and to speculations as to her character, make and manner of motion. These were matters of considerable amusement to Julian Hartwick and Don Collins. In fact these boys were aboard the airship on the night of the fireworks display. Plans for the occasion had been well arranged. The boys had agreed to slip out of their rooms as soon as they were able in the evening and meet at a point not far from the academy. This plan was carried into effect and the two were then driven with speed in an automobile awaiting them, to the airship building in the woods. Here they found

the craft and her crew ready for the trip that was destined to make all temporarily famous.

Everything went smoothly and by ten thirty o'clock the machine was hovering over the city, sweeping earth and sky with its searchlights. This performance was continued half an hour to attract the attention of all who were awake and to bring from their beds all who had retired. Then the fireworks began and a spectacular sight it was. Don and Julian will never forget that experience and they have not yet altered their opinion that it surpassed any show they had ever seen.

Fortunately, on that evening Phil Dunbar was not watching for Julian to make a night trip to the distant clearing. In fact, he had relaxed his espionage over his schoolmate since the scare he had received on the night when Don followed him and shied a stone through the window where he was acting the spy. Several times he planned to make another trip to the place for the purpose of a more thorough investigation, but on each occasion his courage failed him. Strange to say, he did not connect the lonely place in the timber with the airship, although he felt that Julian was on terms of familiarity with both and that Don had

ridden with Julian on the vessel. If any suggestion of such connection came to his mind at all, he put it aside, for it never occurred to him that the airship could have been constructed in such an out-of-the-way place.

Soon after the sensation caused by the appearance of the searchlights and the fireworks over the neighboring city, Phil and his companions recalled and discussed very seriously Don's and Julian's connection with the great wonder. Some of them decided at once to watch the movements of these two boys. On three nights in succession four of them stole out of the dormitory and watched an hour or more for the appearance of either or both of the two mysterious friends. On the third night their vigil was rewarded by the appearance of both boys hurrying along the dark edge of the campus and making off southward. Phil, Dick Harding, Stacey Williams and Homer Bradley were the watchers. They immediately set out in pursuit, following at a distance of about two hundred feet.

Don and Julian led them along the same general route that Phil and his fellow Hide-outers frequently took to reach the cave in the hill by the

river. Meanwhile Don and Julian were busy in talk.

"I don't believe anybody saw me leave," said Don. "I took good care and I'm sure I got away safe."

"I guess we're safe enough," replied Julian. "I'm pretty sure neither Dunbar nor any of his bunch were watchin'. Anyway it wouldn't make much difference, since the reason for keeping the airship a secret is about gone."

"By the way," asked Don, "did you ever have any suspicion who put the notes in our hats that day?"

"Sure I did. I forgot to tell you. I suspected Billy Beckman all along and yesterday I got him to make a confession. I put the question up to him so quick he colored up an' got confused an' couldn't deny it. He said when we made that single-file trip to Harry's place, he was awake when we started and saw us. Next day he saw Phil eyeing us in funny manner. He seems to be gettin' a dislike for Dunnie. He thought he'd tip us both off and put us on our guard."

"Good for Billy," said Don enthusiastically. "I hope he keeps clear of Dunbar and his gang."

They reached the clearing at last and were admitted into the airship building after Julian had given his whistle signal. Phil and his companions were close behind them and remained at the edge of the open until the two they were following had disappeared. Then the trailers were about to cross the open space between them and the building when footsteps near by caused them to hesitate. There was no mistaking the sound; they heard it distinctly. Evidently the newcomer had no suspicion of the proximity of the boys for, whoever it was he advanced without looking to right or left. Phil and his cronies crouched in the darkness of a cluster of bushes. Then it was seen that a man was approaching and that he was muttering to himself. At the edge of the clearing, about twenty feet from those who were watching him, the man stopped and seemed to be gazing intently toward the building which Don and Julian had entered. Then, suddenly, he shook his fist in the direction of his gaze and exclaimed:

“ You done me dirt, the worst kind. I’m goin’ to get revenge if I’m jailed for it.”

CHAPTER XVI

THE MAN IN THE WOODS

“ I wonder who he is? ”

“ What in the world can he mean? ”

“ Is he after Collie and Jule? ”

These whispered questions were uttered in the pitch-dark spot in the bushes that sheltered the four enemies of Don Collins and Julian Hartwick. All were so excited that it was a wonder they did not reveal their whereabouts to the man. But he was so preoccupied that it is probable a good deal more noise could have been made without attracting his attention.

“ Don’t talk so loud, ” cautioned Phil, elbowing his nearest companion. “ You fellows stay here! I’m goin’ to do some scoutin’ to find out what’s up. That man means mischief o’ some sort. Stick here till I come back. If I need you, I’ll give the scout cry. ”

The last words were uttered with an expression of scorn. Phil stole silently from the place. He crept cautiously toward the man at the edge of

the clearing, taking every precaution not to crack a dry stick or rustle the underbrush or to let the limb of a tree or bush swing back with a swish after he had bent it forward. His progress was slow but neither did the man seem to be in any hurry. It did not take Phil long to get within five feet of the fellow. At this distance the boy found himself standing behind a large tree. From this position he could watch and listen with little danger of being detected.

The man of mystery seemed large and powerful. As nearly as Phil could determine, he wore a slouch hat and his face was shaven except as to his upper lip, which was adorned with a long moustache. He was smoking a pipe.

Phil's position was not directly behind but a little to the left of the man. Because of this he was able to get a good side view of his face. The man was still mumbling to himself and this was what the watcher behind the tree was most interested in. As Phil reached his position of vantage the man of the slouch hat, who hitherto had stood motionless, gazing toward the larger of the two buildings, shifted a little as if with impatience. Leaning forward the boy heard him mutter :

“ Didn’t I keep his secret three months? Why shouldn’t he do something for me for being a decent guy? Then he comes across with nothin’ but wages an’ tells me to go chase myself. Why, I could’ve spoiled his game as easy as turnin’ over. I wish now I’d done it, too.”

“ I wonder what he means,” thought Phil to himself. “ Does he mean Church-mouse or Collie-dog? It can’t be Church-mouse, for he couldn’t pay wages even to a kid for three months. It’s Smarty! ”

Here Phil’s low exclamation almost betrayed his presence, so great was his excitement. But the man was mumbling again, though indistinctly. “ I see now,” continued Phil to himself. “ I’m a mutt. I guess I’d better quit this kind o’ business and go back to peace scoutin’. Right here is where the airship is kept. Mebbe it was built here! ”

So great was the boy’s astonishment as he stumbled onto this solution of the mystery that he could hardly keep from rushing back to his three companions.

“ I wonder if Smarty owns the airship or if some relative or friend o’ his owns it,” were the

thoughts in Phil's mind. "O' course Churchmouse can't own it or have any interest in it. He can't even buy a decent suit o' clothes. But Smarty might. Still that ain't likely. I'll bet it's some one Collie-dog knows."

By this time the voice of the man became audible again and Phil was all attention, forgetful for the moment of his own ideas.

"Anyway," said the man in the slouch hat, "it's up to me to get busy. What I'm afraid of is that they're goin' to fly to-night. That'll spoil ever'thing. But I've got to wait till there's no one on watch. This thing o' watchin', however, ain't accordin' to my style."

"That means he's interested in the thing," thought Phil. "I wonder what he's goin' to do. Watch here all night?"

"It'd make a fine little blaze — both them buildings would," went on the man, who was conveniently addicted to the habit of talking to himself. "I'd like to touch a match to 'em."

Phil thought it about time to make his presence known. "I say, mister!" — he called guardedly.

The man whirled with an exclamation. It sounded much like an oath. As the dimly outlined

figure turned and saw the youth who had addressed him, he sprang forward. Before Phil could escape, the big fellow seized him by both shoulders.

“ What are you doin’ here, kid? ”

Phil, desperately frightened but hopeful, screwed up his courage and replied with assumed boldness.

“ I’m doin’ the same as you.”

“ The same as me! What’s that? ”

“ Watchin’ that house.”

“ Watching that house? What for? ”

“ Cause them in it are no friends of mine.”

“ That don’t mean nothin’. Mebbe there’s lots o’ folks that ain’t no friends o’ yourn, but you don’t go about gluin’ your peepers onto their homes on a dark night. Not much, kid. There’s somethin’ more you’re doin’ here. Out with it an’ no monkeyin’ ! ”

Phil was usually boastful of his strength. But this was a powerful man whose grip afforded painful evidence of greater strength. The boy had revealed his presence because he saw that the stranger was no friend of some occupant of the larger building. Phil had a hazy hope that he

and his pals might work with the man in some way. In the face of the present difficulty, he exclaimed boldly as he could:

“ You might be a little careful how you handle me, partner. I’ve friends within a few feet an’ they’re watchin’ us. If you get too rough you’ll find them on top o’ you in about three seconds.”

Phil really believed this or he would not have dared to say it. He did not know that at that instant, Stacey and Dick and Homer were trembling in their shoes and on the verge of flight. But his words had the desired effect. The man took his hands from Phil’s shoulders and asked:

“ Friends, eh? Who are they? ”

“ They’ll be friends of yours, too, if you want ’em,” replied the boy with renewed courage. “ We’re out here on the trail of a couple o’ fellows that just went into that building. You must ’a’ seen ’em.”

“ I did. What about them? ”

“ That’s what *we* want to find out. I’ve got ’em under suspicion.”

“ Look out, kid! You’re lyin’ to me or holdin’ somethin’ back. Gimme the whole truth. I don’t care a rip for your friends. I’m a peaceable citi-

zen and don't want to get into trouble when I don't have to, but I've got a pea-shooter in my pocket and won't hesitate to use it if I got to. Now, what's this mean? "

" Airship," answered Phil.

" Airship! " exclaimed the man, leaning forward and peering into the boy's face. " What d'you know about the airship? "

" That's the password here. It ain't necessary to say anything more."

" But it is," insisted the man fiercely. " You got to explain."

" You tell me your story and I'll tell you mine."

" Go ahead yourself. Then I'll see what I'll do."

" Well," began Phil reluctantly, convinced that this was the best bargain he could make, " those two boys you saw enter the buildin' are fellows I don't like. One of 'em struck me on the head in the dark the other night an' nearly finished me. I want to get even. That's what I'm here for."

" But what about the airship? "

" Don't you know about it? "

" Yes, but I want to know what you know."

"Well, I know it's there," ventured Phil.

"Right. But what do you want to do?"

"I don't know. I thought mebbe you could help me."

"What made you think that?"

"I heard you talkin' to yourself an' makin' threats. I reckon you're not very friendly toward some one in there. If you're tryin' to get even for somethin' we might toss in together."

"Right you are, kid! What shall it be?"

"That's what I hoped you'd suggest," answered Phil. "What you say to bindin' 'em hand and foot and leavin' 'em here in the woods."

"I don't know about that," replied the man. "They might die if nobody happened along. But I'll help you capture 'em. Then we'll see what we'll do with 'em. I know the kids myself, or one of 'em, and I ain't got no love for him."

"You know Don Collins and Julian Hartwick?" exclaimed Phil.

"Only the Hartwick kid. But never mind that now. Where'll we get the rope to tie your friends with when we grab 'em?"

"I've got some cord in my pocket," replied Phil. "I brought it along for this if we got a chance."

“ Where’s your pals? ”

“ I’ll get ’em.”

Phil called to the three trembling boys in the bushes.

“ Here, kids. Everythin’s all right. He’s a friend.”

Stacey, Dick and Homer, much relieved by Phil’s words, appeared at once.

“ What’s your name, so I can introduce you? ” smiled Phil, addressing the stranger.

“ Jake Spellman.”

The introduction finished, the five conspirators further discussed their plans. In the course of this, Spellman unfolded a most audacious scheme. It surprised the four boys, who, however, heartily indorsed the idea. It meant for one thing, that they could not return to Greenwood Academy for several days. Such truancy would get them into trouble with “ Prexy Porkie ” but they felt confident that their parental connections would soon set them right again. While they were in the midst of this discussion their attention was suddenly diverted by the opening of the airship house and the appearance of Don and Julian, who at once advanced toward them.

“ Here they come,” said Stacey, the first to observe the two boys step from the building. “ They’re goin’ back to the Academy.”

“ Yes, and they’re makin’ for this very spot,” whispered Spellman. “ Now git ready, kids, an’ be careful. I’ll take the boy on the right. I c’n handle him alone. You fellows take the other one. One of you clap a hand over his mouth the first thing so’t he can’t make no noise.”

Don and Julian were advancing across the clearing on the wagon trail, little dreaming of the danger that awaited them.

CHAPTER XVII

THE CAPTORS AND THE CAPTIVES

Don Collins and Julian Hartwick made the trip to the airship house for a special reason. This reason was Julian's. Don accompanied him as a friend. Of course, they knew they were violating a rule of the school when they left the dormitory at night by climbing secretly through Julian's window. But they were boys, and like most boys, they found it easier to break rules sometimes than to be governed by them.

Julian had agreed to go to see his brother at this time as the latter was about to take an important step regarding the airship. The boy was sufficiently interested to wish to keep well informed on this subject at all times. The conference being between the brothers alone, Don, at the suggestion of Julian, withdrew and spent the time studying the airship.

At the close of the discussion between the brothers, Julian announced that he was ready to return to the academy. Don had had no assistance in

the inspection of the air craft. Mrs. Hartwick had gone to visit relatives and the helpers had been granted leave of absence. Therefore, before the boys left the place, Don asked for an explanation of several puzzling features of the aeroplane. Then the boys bade the inventor good night and started on their return.

They had reached the edge of the clearing and entered upon the little roadway cut through the woods when out from the timber sprang several forms toward them. Don and Julian had little opportunity to defend themselves. Yet they struggled with all the strength they could bring into play.

Don was seized by hands so powerful that it seemed as if the one clapped over his mouth would crush in his face. He was thrown to the earth face downward, with a heavy knee on his back. He would have called for help, hoping for assistance from Mr. Hartwick, but the crushing weight of the knee pressed the wind out of him. He could hardly breathe. Spellman, Don's assailant, then tied the boy's hands behind his back and drew a handkerchief over his mouth. Then he bound Don's feet and hands together.

Of course, Phil and his three companions had little difficulty in overpowering Julian and rendering him helpless in a similar manner. Then Spellman called the four boys aside.

“Now, I guess they’re safe enough,” he began. “If you did as good a job with your prisoner as I did with mine, they are. The next move’s toward the building. But you fellers stick here a minute while I investigate. I’ll be back right away.”

With this caution Spellman started across the clearing, while his confederates nervously awaited his return. The boys could see his form until he reached the building. Then he moved to another side of the structure and was no longer visible. In their eagerness and anxiety Phil and his friends paid little attention to their new prisoners. These were cudgeling their brains for some method of escape and, meanwhile, straining at the cords binding their limbs.

Spellman was gone about fifteen minutes. On his return he exhibited an exhilaration that indicated he was highly pleased with something.

“Ever’t’ing’s workin’ out great!” exclaimed the man, jubilantly. “The gink is all alone.

Ever'body else seems gone away. Now the question is, how can we get in? I reckon the door's locked an' bolted on the inside. I know it's made o' good strong stuff."

"I've got an idea," suggested Phil in a half-scared voice. "We'll give the same signal Church-mouse uses to get in — three whistles."

"Good!" approved the man admiringly. "You've got the head of a gen'ral. Our man'll think it's his little brother come back for some-thin'. Let's work it this way. You stick here at the edge of the woods, an' the other boys and me'll sneak over there an' get by the door. Then you give the whistles and start to run up to the buildin'. Our friend inside'll open the door an' we'll jump 'im. You come hoppin' along to help if you're needed."

"I got you," said Phil with a great show of courage. "That suits me. Go ahead and get ready and I'll make the guy think his brother's come back all right."

Accordingly, Spellman and Phil's three pals hurried to the shed occupied by the inventor and his invention. As soon as they were stationed near the entrance, Phil blew three blasts so like

Julian's signal that the latter and Don Collins thrilled with wonder and apprehension as they lay in the gloom tugging at their bonds.

The ruse was successful. The door flew open and Julian's brother appeared in the entrance. Out of the darkness four figures rushed at him and a fierce but unequal struggle followed. It could end in only one way, although Mr. Hartwick was a man of no mean strength himself. In a few minutes the inventor was lying on the floor bound hand and foot. His captors at once began their further actions toward carrying out their big plan.

In the meantime, Don and Julian were not idle. Not a moment did they waste after being left alone. They tugged at the cords on their wrists until pain made it necessary to stop. Just then, Don, to his surprise, for he had not attempted this consciously, found his mouth free from the gag. This discovery of course gave him new hope. Rolling over toward his friend and announcing his purpose as he did so, Don managed with difficulty to get into a working position and began to gnaw at the cord binding Julian's wrists.

This was no small task, for the cord was heavy

and tough. Don has since declared that he must have worked twenty minutes or more before he succeeded in pulling it loose. But after this the effecting of their freedom was a matter of less than a minute. Julian drew a knife from his pocket and this was soon used in an effective manner.

“ Who do you reckon they are? ” panted Don as he examined with the tips of his fingers the chafings on his wrists.

“ Why, don’t you know? ” exclaimed his friend. “ They’re Phil Dunbar and some o’ his bunch, o’ course. I’m sure I heard Stace Williams.”

“ Is that so? But who’s the man? ”

“ What man? ”

“ The one who jumped me. Didn’t you hear him? ”

“ No. I was too busy with the ones who tackled me. But what do you suppose they’re up to? ”

“ I haven’t an idea. But we’d better find out, if they’re in the neighborhood. Let’s have a look about.”

None of the sounds of the struggle in the airship building had reached the ears of Don and Julian. They had been busy trying to liberate themselves.

If the noise of the fight had been loud enough to reach the boys, their plight so absorbed them that they heard nothing. However, as soon as they succeeded in freeing themselves, they at once directed their attention to the building in which they had left Julian's brother. The first thing that occurred to them, in fact, was to return and inform Harry Hartwick of their experience. With this in mind they hurried to the edge of the clearing.

In this, fearing that their captors were yet in the vicinity, the boys were cautious, hesitating several minutes before leaving the cover of the woods. Julian, also, for the same reason, refrained from giving the signal to announce his presence to his brother. Although they could think of no reason why Phil Dunbar and a strange man should wish to enter the airship house, yet the fact that Phil or some member of his party had given Julian's signal for admittance caused the two boys considerable apprehension. At last, however, they moved slowly and carefully from the edge of the timber. Halfway to the building, Don hastily shot his hand to his friend's shoulder.

"Down, quick!" he whispered.

Both boys dropped to the ground. Julian saw the reason almost as soon as did Don. The door was ajar!

"What's that mean?" murmured Julian in an undertone.

"It means mischief," replied Don with like caution. "Let's crawl up closer."

They worked their way forward, keeping their eyes on the partly opened door for sight of a possible sentinel. When they started from the timber they were unable to see the light through the open door. But a closer approach altered their position so that the light finally fell within their vision. In the struggle the door had been nearly closed and it had been left thus by the invaders.

Don and Julian at last got close enough to the door to look in. They saw at once Julian's brother lying bound on the floor. They also saw Phil and his associates doing that which fairly took their breath away. Julian tugged at Don's sleeve until he had drawn him some distance from the building. Then he whispered in tones of excitement:

"They're movin' the airship out. I'll bet they're goin' to try to fly it!"

“Do you know who that man is?” was Don’s anxious reply.

“Yes. It’s Jake Spellman. He’s an engineer who worked for Harry awhile. He’s a clever mechanic but he’s pretty tough. Harry fired him because he was makin’ demands and threats. He wanted extra money for keepin’ Harry’s secret. Harry stood him off till ever’thing was about finished. Then the man began to get ugly. My brother gave him what was comin’ to him in wages and fired him. Jake swore he’d get even. That’s why Harry hurried to give the fireworks show. That was the thing he wanted to do secretly.”

“We got to stop those fellows,” announced Don with determination. “Mebbe we can slip in and set your brother loose.”

“We’ll try,” added Julian. “Come on. Let’s get back to the door and see how things look.”

But disappointment met them when they looked into the building again. The airship had been wheeled out through the wide doorway at the other end. Jake Spellman and Phil Dunbar had returned to where Mr. Hartwick was lying and they were talking to him. The conversation was loud enough to be overheard by the spying boys.

"We want you to run that ship for us," Jake was saying.

"You're crazy, Spellman, if you think I'd do any such thing," replied the prisoner. "You can go ahead and try it. You'll either be killed or sent to the pen. Loosen me now and go away and I'll say nothing about it. If you don't, you're goin' to get into a fine little mess o' trouble."

"You can't scare me," replied Jake, pompously. "I've started this to carry it through. You can settle matters just like I've told you. If you don't, we go ahead alone."

"I'll agree to no such thing. It's robbery. You can wreck the aeroplane but I'll not give you a cent."

"Then I'll sink her in the Mississippi river."

"Do as you like."

"There's one way we can *make* you pilot the thing," began Jake anew. "We'll take you with us. Then you'll be glad to get busy. If you don't, you can see us wreck her and kill everybody on board *including yourself*."

Hartwick was evidently not anticipating anything of this sort, for he remained silent as if not knowing just how to reply. Dick Harding and

Homer Bradley now approached to see what success Spellman was having in his talk with the inventor. Julian, seeing the coast clear for the plan now actively in his mind, again tugged at Don's sleeve and drew him away from their listening place.

"Come quick!" he exclaimed after they had retreated some distance. "The coast's clear. We'll save the day — or night — yet. Are you game?"

"Yes."

"For anything?"

"Anything you say."

"Come on."

Julian ran around the corner of the building and to the farther end. Don tried to fathom his plan. They approached the airship where it stood in the open, and gazed quickly into the building before taking another step. The man and the four boys were still standing over the helpless form of Mr. Hartwick.

"All right. In we go," whispered Julian. "Follow me."

The inventor's brother ran up the short flight of steps and Don Collins darted after him into the cabin of the vessel of the air.

CHAPTER XVIII

AIR PIRATES

“ Can you run the ship? ”

“ No. I’m not goin’ to try.”

“ What are you goin’ to do? ”

“ Hide.”

Don’s questions were answered in this manner as the boys slipped into the cabin. Here Julian immediately showed that the plan he had in mind was based upon a thorough knowledge of the lay-out of the vessel. Lighting a match, he went to a locker at one end of the cabin and opened the door. Reaching in, he drew out a revolver, broke it open and then gave voice to an exclamation of disappointment.

“ Empty! ”

He quickly thrust the harmless weapon into his pocket, however, and turned to a door in the rear of the cabin, Don assisting him with matches to light the way. Julian opened the door and they passed in, closing the door behind them.

The little room in which they found themselves

was about six by six feet square. In the daytime it was lighted by a skylight. There were electric light bulbs throughout the ship, including this room, but the dynamo was not now in operation.

"This is a provision and store room used only on long trips," explained Julian.

"The door's the only way to get out, isn't it?"

"No. If necessary we can get out through the skylight. It opens."

While Don and Julian were thus examining the ship all was not clear sailing outside for the conspirators. Two of the boys, Stacey Williams and Homer Bradley, were already showing signs of timidity. They were afraid something might happen.

"Oh, you're a pair o' dead ones," commented Phil. "I'm surprised at you, Stace. I thought you had some grit."

"Well, I haven't," replied Stacey. "There's too much danger in this for me."

"You don't think for an instant Hartwick'll refuse to run the ship after we get him on board, do you? We'll have a revolver at his head all the time if he gets ugly. Besides, he thinks too much of this trap to let anybody else run it."

“ There ain’t no denyin’ you’ve got to have nerve to start a thing like this,” put in Spellman. “ And if you ain’t got it, you’d better quit. Two is enough anyway.”

“ Where are you goin’ ? ” asked Stacey feebly.

“ Under sealed orders,” said Jake with a leer and a wink.

“ What’s that mean ? ”

“ Now see here. You kids wanted me to help you get revenge on them other kids we left in the woods. I told you I’d help. Now you’d better let me engineer the job. I can sail the ship. I worked on it three months. I’ll agree to take you on a peach of a trip. Are you willin’ to take my word for it ? ”

“ I am,” replied Phil bravely.

“ So’m I,” chimed in Dick.

“ I guess so,” hesitated Stacey.

Homer did not answer.

“ You two half-hearted kids can’t go,” announced Jake decidedly. “ I don’t want anybody on board that’ll start anything.”

Phil here took Jake aside in order probably that the inventor might not hear what he had to say.

“ I want to take the two prisoners in the woods along with us,” he said.

“ Along! What for? ” asked the astonished Jake.

“ Well, I’ve been thinkin’ it over and I’ve decided it ain’t safe to leave ’em here. Besides, I think I can get somethin’ on ’em if we take ’em with us.”

“ I don’t care one way or the other,” grunted Spellman.

Accordingly, Mr. Hartwick was forced to his feet, carried out of the building and up the steps into the airship. There Spellman said he would remain on guard while the boys went for the other prisoners.

Stacey and Homer went with Phil and Dick into the woods to fetch Don and Julian, although they were not booked for the trip in the air. Phil was certain he knew the exact spot where they had left the two prisoners in the bushes. In fact he did. He led the way to the place.

The four conspirators were more than surprised at their inability to find the two bound forms they had left. They searched over a wide stretch of ground, thinking the two Boy Scouts might have

rolled from the place where they had been left. Of course, they were unable to find them. They did find, however, something that explained the disappearance. With the aid of matches they discovered several pieces of string that had been cut with a knife.

The alarmed Phil and his followers hastened back to the airship and reported the facts to Spellman. The latter seemed little interested, for the feud between the boys was no concern of his. He merely nodded his head and announced that everything was ready for the flight.

“ I’d like to set a blaze to them two buildings,” he did say with interest, “ but they’re not worth much and I guess the blaze might attract attention.”

It was still dark when the airship arose over the trees, leaving Homer and Stacey to look after her with hungry gaze, almost wishing they had had the courage to go along. Spellman insisted that the owner should take charge of the steering apparatus and so, before they started, he caused Mr. Hartwick to be stationed close behind him, where he could turn quickly at any time and sever the inventor’s bonds if anything went wrong.

Phil, who had had practical experience in running a motor boat, took charge of the engine after he had received some instructions from Jake.

The Nora lifted slowly into the air until she was well above the tree tops. She moved with ease and regularity. The only fault that might have been found was the noise made by the large propellers.

Meanwhile, Dick Harding proved himself a very inquisitive fellow. After Phil was no longer able to interest him in the engine and he had spent some minutes watching Spellman steer the craft, Dick began to look about. He stuck his nose into every nook and corner he could find. He tried all the lockers in the cabin but was unable to open them. Then he put his hand on the knob of the door of the store room, little aware of the sensation this caused within.

Then he opened the door and stepped into the room. Don and Julian crouched back into the corner to the left of the entrance. Then the intruder struck a match.

This last act was the signal to the boys in hiding that it was time to act. There was no chance to remain undiscovered. Quick as a flash, Don

sprang forward and from behind threw his arms around the boy air pirate.

The first thought that Dick had as he found a strong pair of arms bearing him to the floor was that it might be Phil playing a joke on him. Then, as quickly, he suspected that the inventor might have escaped and was attempting to retake the ship. He knew that there was little use to struggle. Indeed, he scarcely had time to think of resistance before he found himself flat on his back and pinioned down by a muscular pair of hands.

While Don was engaged in holding down the prisoner, Julian closed the door and turned on an electric light. Then the much frightened Dick saw who his captors were, and would have given the alarm but Don put one hand over his mouth and smothered the noise.

“Take your handkerchief and make a string long enough to tie his feet together,” ordered Don. But Julian was already doing this very thing. The job was soon finished. Then Julian took Don’s handkerchief, and the same thing was done to the prisoner’s hands. This task was followed by a gagging of the now helpless air pirate with his own handkerchief.

"That's mighty good work," chuckled Don. "Now, if we could only entice Phil into this room we'd soon have possession of the ship."

"I think we'd better go out where he is and capture him there," suggested Julian.

"But he'll fight."

"Not when he sees this."

Julian drew from his pocket the unloaded revolver he had found in the cabin locker.

"Good for you, Jule," said Don. "You've got a head like a safety razor—full o' possibilities."

Here the conversation was interrupted by a sound that caused both boys to spring up in amazement. It was a distinct tapping on the skylight above. Not a word was said for fully a minute, the boys silently gazing at each other and then up at the place from which the sound came. Presently the tapping stopped. Then these plaintive words came through the glass panes:

"Please let me in."

The petition was followed by a succession of half suppressed sobs.

"Jule!" whispered Don, "there's some one on the deck o' this ship. Who can it be?"

“ We’ll soon find out,” replied Julian as he reached up to the low ceiling and slid open the skylight.

The white, frightened face that was thrust into the opening was that of Billy Beckman!

CHAPTER XIX

THE ADVENTURE OF BILLY

When Phil and his three companions set out to follow Don and Julian earlier in the evening, the Dunbar party also was secretly followed by a lone boy. This was no other than Billy Beckman. To explain his presence on the hurricane deck of the airship, a thread of this story must be picked up in another place.

Billy knew that his cousin was one of the Dunbar quartette that had started after Don and Julian. But this made little difference to him. He was sore at both Phil and Stacey because both had shown a disposition to keep him out of the councils of the Happy Hide-outers. As a result of this slight, Billy had begun to style the followers of Phil, "Phil-istines." From that day he was much in disfavor with them.

When Billy pinned the notes of warning to the hats of Don and Julian in the Boy Scout camp, the "Phil-istine" joke had not been cracked. Of course Phil did not know the contents of the notes

but he suspected something of the truth and immediately confronted Billy with his suspicion. Billy replied with a fib that partly deceived Dunbar. But when Beck sprang his joke about the "Phil-istines," Phil remembered all the other half forgotten scores against the little fellow and resolved to put him in the Dunbar black list. This he did with Stacey's half-hearted approval.

Then Billy decided to watch Phil and his followers and "get the goods" on them. Therefore it was not for the purpose of protecting the interests of Don and Julian that he followed the four "Phil-istines" who were in turn following Collins and Hartwick, although he was much more friendly toward the latter two boys. Moreover, there was a good deal of mystery surrounding the actions of Don, Julian and Phil. The inquisitive Billy decided to find out what was in the wind.

For these reasons, happening to be watching the actions of Phil Dunbar on the evening when the memorable trip across the country began, Billy followed at a safe distance behind the four "Phil-istines." But he did not witness the capture of Don and Julian by Spellman and his boy confederates. He had already become interested

in the airship buildings and while he was engaged in making an inspection of this for his own benefit, he lost track of the other actors in the interesting and mysterious woodland drama.

Then he began a cautious search to find them again. But his extreme caution made this necessarily slow. When he did find the boys, it was while he was standing at the edge of the clearing when the lawless company had started toward the airship house.

Billy witnessed the struggle until the door was knocked almost shut in the fight. He was frightened but the novelty of the situation overcame his fears. Then he crept close to the house and looked in.

He saw the large door at the far end opened and a big, queer-looking machine on wheels pushed out. Billy could not conjecture what it might be and he went around the house to the other end to find out.

This lone boy detective, for such he now began to consider himself, was brave enough in many respects. At least he was not afraid to take a bold step. The top of the wheeled machine seemed to him to be a good place for a Boy Scout. Boy-

like he decided to climb to the top by means of the steps that led to the cabin.

By the time he had reached the hurricane deck, Billy realized the nature of the vehicle on which he stood. He even suspected that it was the craft that had created such a sensation in that part of the country a few days previously. The suspicion made his discovery the more interesting. He would gladly have explored the interior of the ship but it was dark within and he had no matches. He contented himself with remaining on the top, trying to make a study of the screw lifters and propellers.

Having no suspicion of the plan of Jake Spellman and the "Phil-istines" to make a flight in the air, Billy was content to remain in hiding on top of the ship. A little later he became afraid to descend to the ground because of the sound of voices and moving feet below. He heard Don and Julian enter the ship but did not know who they were. Then he heard the Spellman-Dunbar party as it forced Julian's brother into the aeronautic prison he had made for himself. Several persons went away and were gone about fifteen minutes, after which they returned in a good deal of excitement.

Billy was forced to remain on top of the vessel while preparations were being made for the start. He little thought, however, that he was about to make a flight high above the earth on the open back of a ship of the air, his only protection the four-foot railing that ran around the deck of the metal craft. To be sure, this was quite adequate so long as the ship remained upright, but sailing high above the earth is not like sailing on the water. The novice aviator, for in such a position Billy soon found himself, is likely to see mental pictures of ungraceful somersaults in the air.

The entire exterior of the vessel seemed to be of polished metal. Even in the dim starlight the reflections from its surface were noticeable. Near the middle of the deck was a trapdoor leading into the cabin. But Billy at first did not attempt to open this. He was fearful of revealing his presence to those within. He inspected the mechanism that was visible from the deck and looked with awe at the great lift and propeller screws.

Suddenly the lift screws began to revolve. They were seven or eight feet above the deck and there was no danger of their striking his head. But

nevertheless Billy became frightened. The huge air fans whirled faster and faster, forcing upon him a strong wind and blowing his straw hat off. He tried to catch the hat as it flew toward the railing but it eluded him and flopped under the railing to the ground. Then he felt the ship move, straining and rocking as if hesitating whether to rise from or cling to the earth. Deciding in favor of the former, it arose and was soon over the tree tops. As he saw these sink below the level of the deck, Billy dropped prone on the latter and tried to find something to hold fast to. The framework of one of the lift screws proved convenient for this. The fact that the ship was now riding easily and with no rocking, reassured him somewhat. Then he crawled to the hatch with a hope of being able to descend even into the midst of a company of unfriendly persons.

He found a ring handle on the hatch and tried to raise it. He did not know that it was necessary to twist it to unlatch the deck door. He failed. Believing the hatch locked, he sank back and clung again to a near-by bit of framework, sobbing in fear. Here he remained for a long time almost crazed with fright. The ship flew swiftly through

the air but Billy had no knowledge of the speed at which she was traveling. Gradually, however, he became accustomed to the noise of the powerful screws and looked up at them with a numb, half-conscious curiosity.

Then he began to look about him again. He had seen the small skylights over the cabin, the store room, the engine room and the pilot house. As it happened, close shades were drawn over all except the skylight of the room in which Don and Julian had hidden themselves. He was just beginning to crawl about on his hands and knees to look again for an opening through one of the deck windows, when Dick Harding entered the store room and struck a match.

Billy caught a glimpse of the three boys in the flare. He recognized the face of only one of them, Don Collins. Then he saw Don and another boy seize the boy with the lighted match and the flame was extinguished. The noise of the struggle came to him indistinctly but after a few minutes an incandescent bulb was turned on. He could see that the struggle was all over. Then he also recognized Julian and Dick and decided to attract attention.

The result has been described. Billy lost no time in lowering himself into the little room.

CHAPTER XX

TRAPPING THE AIR PIRATES

Of course Don and Julian were all excitement on discovering Billy Beckman. They began excitedly to ply him with whispered questions.

“What on earth are you doing here?”

“How under the sun did you get up there?”

“How long have you been there?”

These were some of the questions that Billy had to face. Meanwhile the surprise of his questioners tended to make him forget his own fright on the open deck. He began to feel himself something of a hero.

“One question at a time,” he exclaimed, swelling out his chest in a comical manner — comical in view of his recent fright. “I’ve been ridin’ out under the stars and keepin’ cool in the breeze of the big fans. But it got a little too cool. I thought I’d come in.”

“Yes you did,” replied Julian incredulously. “If we’re to judge by the whiteness of your face

when you looked through the skylight, you were nearly scared to death."

"Oh, that was just because of the light on my face," protested Billy with a suppressed guffaw.

"But the light didn't make your eyes stand out. Besides, you've been cryin'. Right now you're tremblin' like a leaf. No, Billy, you can't put that one over on us. You were scared good and proper."

"Never mind, Beck," said Don with renewed caution as to silence. "That's a brave thing to do — ride out there on the open deck up here in the air. But how'd you happen to get there?"

"I followed you fellows from the school."

"What for?"

"Because you were bein' followed."

"By Phil Dunbar and some others?"

"Yes."

"What were they followin' us for? Do you know?"

"Oh, just to be mean I guess. Ask Hardie there."

"You wait till I get out o' this and I'll fix you, you little sneak," said Dick Harding, who had already managed to get the gag from his mouth.

“ You won’t do any such thing,” announced Don positively. “ You lay a finger on Billy and I’ll stir your face till it looks like a bowl o’ punch.”

“ You ain’t big enough. You never was. You never will be. Just take these rags off my wrists and ankles and gimme a chance. I’ll show you what I can do. You’re too much of a coward to do anything but jump on my back, two of you, in the dark. A fine pair o’ sneaks both o’ you.”

“ How about the way you fellows jumped on us in the woods? ” asked Julian.

“ You keep your trap shut, Church-mouse. Nobody was speakin’ to you.”

“ Well, I’ll ask the question,” interposed Don with a smile. “ Mebbe you’ll answer me.”

“ I wasn’t runnin’ that game,” replied Dick, sullenly. “ Anyway, we didn’t have no time to waste on you then.”

“ Well, we haven’t any time to waste on you now. I’ll consider your challenge later. By the way, Billy, you haven’t explained how you happened to get on top of the ship.”

Billy told this chapter of his experiences without attempting to assume any credit to himself.

Then the subject of taking possession of the ship came up for discussion and Don explained to Billy all that had happened.

"We've got one of 'em safe enough an' that leaves four more to be taken care of," said Don. "I wish all of 'em would come in here, one at a time as Dick did."

Don did not know that two of the Dunbarites had lost courage and left the ship just before it started. Had he known that only two of their enemies were at large on the vessel and that both of these were busy running the craft, he would have lost no time in advancing upon them, depending upon Julian's revolver to frighten Phil and Jake Spellman into submission.

Meanwhile the prolonged absence of Dick from the engine room had caused Phil to call him several times. Phil was becoming lonesome and wanted somebody to talk to. Spellman, in the next room, was not of a talkative nature. Moreover, he was occupied with the task of directing the boat's course. Phil had no desire to enter into conversation with Mr. Hartwick, who sat bound hand and foot on a stool near the pilot seat. As Dick made no reply to his calls, Phil decided to go

in search of his pal after making certain that the engine was in condition to be left unattended for a while.

He searched every corner of the ship excepting the store room, even ascending to the hurricane deck where he found not a sign of his missing companion. Much frightened, for he was afraid that Dick might have fallen off the ship, Phil was about to communicate his fear to Spellman when the door leading into the store room caught his eye. As a last hope he decided to open it and look in.

Within this apartment three boys were waiting to receive him. Billy Beckman held a hand over Dick's mouth to prevent his giving warning to his fellow air pirates and Don and Julian stood at one side ready to receive the chief of the Happy Hide-outers. Julian held his brother's empty revolver. If they had known that only Phil and Spellman were in possession of the ship the boys would have turned out the light and opened the door in order to be certain that the searcher would investigate the store room. As it was, they kept still and waited.

As Phil opened the door his mouth fell open. He was too much astonished to make a sound.

Julian, thrusting the revolver up close to the intruder, said with dramatic fierceness:

"Keep still or I'll blow your brains out. Come in."

Phil obeyed as mechanically as if the blood-thirsty command was the real power that moved his body. Don closed the door and began to secure the second prisoner. He found it necessary to take off his shirt and cut it into strips, being careful also to provide enough rope to bind the other pirates as soon as captured. Phil offered no resistance, for he had a wholesome fear of the revolver. While his hands were being tied, he asked:

"How'd you get here?"

"We dropped out of the sky," replied Don. "And we're goin' to drop onto your friends in crime in just a few minutes."

"They've got us goin', that's sure," sputtered Dick. "I think we'd better make a bargain. Let's help 'em make a prisoner of Spellman. They'll need help. He's a big fellow and can handle all the kids on this ship. If Stace and Homer hadn't backed out, we'd have had a chance."

“What’s that?” exclaimed Don and Julian in chorus.

“Well, you’re a nice fool,” muttered Phil with contempt. “Here you’ve told ’em Spellman’s the only one in possession of the ship. All they’ll have to do now is to slip up behind him, put the revolver to his face and our little cruise is all over.”

“Thank you very much for the information,” said Don heartily. “That’s just what we’ll do at once.”

Harry Hartwick had little conversation with Jake Spellman in the pilot house. Spellman had tried hard to induce the inventor to take charge of the steering apparatus but he had refused, hoping thus to compel the air pirate to forego his design. But Jake had a good deal of confidence in his own ability as an aviator, having made numerous flights in aeroplanes and being familiar with the Nora and her operating mechanism. But, as a precaution against wrecking the vessel, he set Mr. Hartwick close behind him and kept an open knife close at hand that he might sever the inventor’s bonds if he found himself at any time in serious difficulty.

It was tiresome sitting there for two hours with no freedom of his limbs and Mr. Hartwick was sorely tempted many times to offer to operate the vessel. But pride and a certain degree of confidence in Spellman's ability held him back. And perhaps this was fortunate.

Of course, Mr. Hartwick had no suspicion that friends were aboard the ship or he would have felt much more cheerful. And it was a far from unpleasant surprise to him when Julian slipped up behind him and held before his eyes a piece of paper on which were written these words:

"You have friends on board. Offer to steer the ship so that Spellman will cut your bonds. I have a revolver and will show myself as soon as you are free.

JULIAN."

The inventor read the note with composure and nodded his head. Julian then slipped back into the rear cabin.

CHAPTER XXI

AN EMPTY REVOLVER

“ Spellman! ”

It was the first time for a long while that Mr. Hartwick had spoken to his captor. Jake gave his questioner no attention until the latter spoke again.

“ Spellman! ”

“ Well, what is it? ”

“ Are you tired? ”

“ Not 'specially.”

“ Like to have me relieve you? ”

“ You’re comin’ around are you? ”

“ I’m tired sittin’ here this way.”

“ I thought you’d wake up. Be careful you don’t play me no tricks. I’ve got a pea-shooter that spits awful hard peas an’ I’ll use it too.”

Jake turned and cut the strings that bound Mr. Hartwick’s wrists.

“ I ain’t a-goin’ to loosen your ankles,” he continued, “ unless you promise to do what I asked. It’s ten thousand dollars for what I done on your

invention. Remember that. If you don't come across, I'll sink this flyer in the Mississippi river."

"I've told you I haven't that much money," protested Mr. Hartwick.

"And I've told you all kinds o' money's comin' to you. I know your deal with Beebe. He's a millionaire an' he's to come across as soon as this thing's a success. That time is past. Are you ready to sign?"

"I'll think it over."

"Well, see that you steer straight while you're thinkin'. I'm watchin' you and the stars. I'll know if you change the course an inch."

Spellman had seen Julian in the pilot house when the latter approached his brother with the note of information, but he supposed the boy was Phil or Dick and paid no attention to his actions. Moreover, the entire proceeding took place behind him and he caught sight of nothing to arouse his suspicion. But when suddenly Julian and Don appeared at the door of the pilot house and interrupted the talk between the inventor and the chief pirate, Spellman knew at once that his game was finished and that he had lost. Julian was pointing a revolver at his head.

“ Wh-wh-wh-where’d you come from? ” Jake’s dismay was almost pitiful.

“ Never mind where we came from,” replied Julian with determination. “ It’s enough for you to know your kid pals are in the same fix you left us in back in the woods. There’s nobody to help you. Throw up your hands. My friends’ll search you for that pea-shooter you’ve been talkin’ so much about. By the way, this one shoots just as hard peas as yours.”

Some time later Jake was informed that the chambers in Julian’s revolver were empty when he and Don took possession of the airship. But then he was locked in the county jail and could do no harm.

Spellman used a good deal of ungentlemanly language as he was being disarmed and his hands and feet secured. He was unable to control his disappointment and swore voluminously, cursing Julian and Don particularly.

“ You’re a cheat and a thief,” were some of the words he used to Julian’s brother. “ You know well enough this airship wouldn’t have been a success if it hadn’t been for me. You’ll make twenty-five thousand dollars. Half of that ought

to be mine. I was only tryin' to get by force what you wouldn't give me by rights."

"Have it your own way," replied Mr. Hartwick. "If you can convince a jury that's the truth maybe you'll be able to make your sentence lighter."

"Do you mean you're goin' to have me arrested?"

"I mean I'm goin' to turn you over to the authorities and tell them my story. If they advise me to let you go, I suppose I will. But you know how much chance there is of my gettin' any such advice."

Mr. Hartwick of course had turned the airship back eastward. It was daylight when he reached the vicinity of the starting place. But he did not land in the clearing in the woods. Instead he made directly for Oberton.

The entire population of this place was soon informed of the arrival of the air craft that had created so much excitement on former occasions. Business was suspended and a crowd of men, women and children was on the scene almost as soon as the ship alighted in an open field within the city limits.

The inventor was the only one of the vessel's crew who showed himself immediately after the landing. Don, Julian and Billy remained inside to keep watch over the prisoners, as it was feared they might loosen their bonds and make a dash for liberty. Mr. Hartwick met the crowd, made an explanation and then asked for the sheriff or the chief of police. The sheriff happened to be one of the first on the scene. He was soon in possession of the story of the adventures of the inventor, the Boy Scouts and the air pirates. The prisoners were taken to jail and warrants sworn out for their arrest. Don, Julian and Billy remained all this time in charge of the *Nora*.

Julian's brother was absent nearly an hour. Meanwhile, the boys remained inside the ship with the gangway closed, as they well knew that they would soon have trouble if they gave any of the crowd encouragement to come aboard. The curious inhabitants of the town showed no disposition to retire. It seemed as if every inhabitant of the place must be gathered around the airship.

"There's not many kids as lucky as we are," said Don as he gazed through a window of the cabin at the big-eyed and gaping townsfolk. "I

bet there's five hundred boys out there jealous of us."

"But they ain't jealous of Phil an' Dick," declared Billy. "I'm glad Stace backed out."

"Yes, an' it'd have been better for Phil an' Dick if they'd done the same," said Julian gravely.

"Do you think they'll be hung for stealin' this airship?" inquired Billy with a comical look of awe.

Both Don and Julian laughed.

"No danger o' that, Beck," Don replied. "They don't hang anybody in this state, an' nobody'd be hung anywhere in this country except for murder."

"Will they be sent to the penitentiary?"

"Spellman will, I suppose. But Phil an' Dick will probably be spanked an' sent home to learn better manners."

The boys were much entertained by the evidences of wonder and curiosity on the part of many of the crowd gathered closely around the ship. Gaping mouths, saucer eyes, all kinds of positions and gestures, converted them into a moving-picture vaudeville. Several of the boys

almost stood on their heads in contortive efforts to see every square inch of the underside of the aeroplane. Some of the younger element jumped about in great glee on discovering that the two circular lookout windows in front suggested the big orbs of a monster in a fairy tale.

When Harry Hartwick returned, he was still accompanied by the sheriff. The latter had insisted that he come to his home, which was connected with the county jail, and be his guest as long as he would stay. This was just the opportunity the inventor was looking for. What he wanted most now was advertisement. This, of course, would come very naturally as a result of the revelation of his achievement, but he had no place in Oberton where he might exhibit the aeroplane for the benefit of persons interested in it in a financial way. The sheriff's offer was a timely one and he accepted it with concealed eagerness.

Sheriff Legler was a shrewd politician. He saw an opening here to make himself famous. He was already well known in the county, but he had an ambition more far-reaching. He wished to become a member of the state legislature.

Here was his opportunity to advertise his

name not only throughout the state, but from one end of the country to the other. Sheriff Legler realized very quickly that such an invention as Harry Hartwick's would bring a flock of newspaper men from many large cities, while the Associated Press would send out dispatches concerning this remarkable achievement. And wherever a report was sent, Louis Legler's name would go with it.

The inventor started the engine, and the airship arose, bearing its owner and the three boys and the aspiring county official, and when they came down to earth again, it was on Sheriff Legler's front lawn. The distance was only a mile, and the crowd followed on a run. Fifteen minutes after the aeroplane alighted, a large part of the population of the city was in front of the sheriff's house, and there were nearly four thousand inhabitants in the place. They tramped all over Mr. Legler's well-kept lawn, and the smiling politician didn't seem to care a fig. Men, women and children—it was an early outing such as Oberton had never seen before.

All the laboring folk were late to work that morning. Those who had not already inspected

the aeroplane at its first landing-place in the town, took advantage of the opportunity now. They tramped over the well-kept and unfenced lawn of Sheriff Legler, eager to get a close view of the magic machine that had caused such a sensation.

It was almost noon by the time the lawn and the street in front of the house were cleared and the aviators were permitted to take a breathing spell. Meanwhile, the news of the excitement had reached Greenwood Academy, and "Prexy Porkie" got into an automobile and broke the speed limit in a race to town to see this new wonder. He arrived shortly before noon, and was greatly surprised to find Don, Julian and Billy explaining to an admiring group of boys some of the mysteries of the airship.

"Ah-ha!" he exclaimed, as he sprang forward and seized Don and Julian by the arm. "So this is what my young runaways are doing, is it? Went crazy over the airship, did you? Well, I'll give you a nice automobile ride back to the academy, and make you write the word airship ten thousand times."

CHAPTER XXII

THE ESCAPE OF THE AIR PIRATES

Don and Julian did not know whether to be frightened or amused at the threatening manner and words of the master of Greenwood. Before they could do either another arrival appeared on the scene and changed the complexion of affairs. This was Mr. Richard Beebe, several times a millionaire and one of the most active members of the board of directors of the school.

He drew President Bacon aside and spoke to him privately. The latter appeared to be astonished. Pretty soon the president turned his attention to the airship, asking the boys and Harry Hartwick a score of questions regarding it. Then he held a private interview with Phil Dunbar and Dick Harding in their cell, after which he got into his automobile and rode away.

If Don Collins and Billy Beckman had overheard the conversation between Mr. Beebe and President Bacon, they would have been deeply puzzled. These are the words that passed between them:

“ Don’t bother the boys,” said Mr. Beebe, as he drew the president aside. “ Let ’em alone. I know all about this affair.”

“ But they ran away from school — stole out of the dormitory at night,” protested Mr. Bacon. “ I can’t overlook that. What kind of discipline will I have, Mr. Beebe? ”

“ The discipline will be all right,” assured the latter. “ Just take my word for it. The boys haven’t been doing anything wrong. I’ll explain everything later. Let the responsibility rest entirely on my shoulders.”

“ All right, if you insist, but I’m very much afraid, Mr. Beebe, you’re making a serious mistake.”

Julian would *not* have been surprised if he had heard this conversation.

The director did not remain long. He did not seem to be at all curious regarding the aeroplane, merely looking it over hastily as a farmer would examine a neighbor’s new threshing machine. Before leaving, he slapped the inventor familiarly on the shoulder and congratulated him heartily.

“ What in the world does all this mean? ” Don asked himself. He would have put the question

to Julian, but preferred to let his friend volunteer an explanation. Julian said nothing.

At noon, the sheriff invited the inventor and the three boys into his dining room for luncheon. The invitation was accepted, and after the meal, Don announced his intention to return to the academy.

"I hope you won't do that yet," spoke up the shrewd politician quickly. "You can't do much more at school to-day, and to-morrow is Saturday, and the next day is Sunday. Why not remain here as my guests until Monday morning? I'll take you over to Greenwood in an auto then."

Sheriff Legler would have made a good newspaper man. He had the news-feature instinct. He understood quickly the important positions the boys would receive in the metropolitan news columns. The inventor himself would not be as great a hero as Billy Beckman, while the recapture of the ship in the air by Don and Julian would set the whole country afire. And as for the sheriff, would it not be an excellent stroke to see to it that the boys were interviewed by the reporters and correspondents at his home? Sheriff Legler decided that it would, and nobody could accuse him

of seeking newspaper notoriety. It was his hospitable nature that had inspired him to ask the boys to remain as his guests — he never thought of such a thing as the advertising consequences for himself.

A local daily was published in Oberton, and the boys had already been interviewed. They consented to remain as the sheriff's guests until Monday morning. In the course of the afternoon and evening, several reporters arrived from Chicago, Milwaukee and other cities within a few hours' ride, and the boys and Harry Hartwick were kept busy telling their story over and over again until midnight. Sheriff Legler managed to be present at all these interviews.

The prisoners were visited in their cells several times by the reporters. Don, Julian and Billy visited them once. Spellman cursed them, Phil Dunbar refused even to look at them, but Dick Harding was repentant and said he was sorry he had "mixed up in such a foolish scrape."

The jail was a two-story brick structure in the rear of and adjoining the home and office of the county sheriff. Outside the windows were the usual iron bars, the only signs that distinguished

it from the front of the building and gave it the appearance of a prison. The three air pirates occupied a cell on the first floor. Of course Sheriff Legler treated the newspaper representatives royally. He caused supper to be served to all who arrived in the afternoon, and gave two of them a bed for the night. These were Roy Johnson, an Associated Press reporter, and Larry Ballantyne, who represented a Chicago morning paper. They occupied a room on the second floor, while Harry Hartwick, Don, Julian and Billy slept in an adjoining apartment which contained two beds.

The aviators were nearly exhausted when they went to bed. They had had no sleep the night before and had been the objects of so much attention during the day and until midnight that they could find no time even to think of taking a nap. But after their heads touched the pillow, they fell asleep almost immediately.

Don awoke with a start. The room was dark, but he had difficulty in remembering where he was. The noise that awakened him thrilled him in the wildest manner. He had been dreaming of their air-pirate adventure. It seemed that

Jake Spellman had made prisoners of him and his friends in the aeroplane shed in the woods, that he escaped and the two had run a race for possession of the vessel, that Spellman won, reaching the ship just in time to spring aboard and fly away before Don could prevent him.

It was the noise of the whirring propellers that awoke the boy. And after he was wide awake, the noise did not cease. Don did not know what to make of it. He was quickly thrown into a confusion of mind, full of weird suggestions. Had Harry Hartwick got up and gone out in his sleep, and was he now unconsciously taking a flight in his aeroplane? Don hastened to examine the bed of the Hartwick brothers, and found them both lying there asleep.

Still the noise of the whirring propellers continued outside. Don went to the window at the head of the bed and ran the curtain up. Day was just breaking, and it was light enough for him to see the Nora rising in the air. A light was shining from the nearest pilot room window.

What could it mean? Who was operating the vessel? Don wondered if he was still dreaming. Then realizing suddenly the importance of quick

action, he turned again to the bed of the Hartwick brothers, and shook the inventor vigorously.

“Wake up, Mr. Hartwick, wake up!” he said.
“Somebody’s stealing your airship!”

“What’s that?” exclaimed the young man, springing out of bed.

“Don’t you hear it? Listen!”

The vibrating sound of the great whirring fans could still be heard, but it died out in the distance while they were listening. Harry sprang to the window and looked out. Don also looked. The airship could be seen faintly in the morning twilight, flying off toward the east.

“What’s the matter, Harry?”

Julian also had awakened, and was sitting up in bed as he asked this question.

“Somebody’s running off with the aeroplane,” replied Harry, as he pulled down the curtain and turned on the electric light.

“Get up an’ dress quick. We’ve got to get out o’ here in ten seconds.”

“Who d’you think it is?” asked Julian as he bounded out of bed.

“There’s only one person possible,” replied

the inventor. "He's the only one besides me who can run the Nora."

"But he's in jail," said Julian.

"Is he?" asked his brother significantly.

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean he's escaped."

This assertion electrified Don and Julian into greater activity, and they were soon dressed. Meanwhile, Billy, who had been sleeping with Don, also awoke and began to pull on his clothes, after catching the drift of affairs.

"I'm goin' to wake the reporters in the next room," announced Julian as he put on his coat and started for the door.

"Yes, do," said the inventor. "The sooner the newspapers get this, the sooner the thieves are likely to be arrested."

"I suppose you think Phil Dunbar an' Dick Harding escaped with Spellman an' helped steal the airship," said Don.

"Sure. They were all in the same cell."

Pretty soon Julian returned with the information that he had awakened Johnson and Ballantyne.

"I'm goin' to wake the sberiff," said Harry,

starting for the door. "He'll know the best way to get after the thieves."

But just then there was a knock on the door, and Mr. Legler entered with evident excitement.

"The prisoners have escaped an' the airship's gone!" he cried.

"Just as I told you," said the owner of the aeroplane, addressing the boys.

"How did they get out?" asked Don.

"Pried loose a couple o' bars on the window. Poor mason-work — the bricks gave way."

"What did they pry with?" inquired Julian.

"Leg of a chair. But come on if you want to catch 'em."

"What's your plan?" asked Harry Hartwick.

"Follow 'em, o' course."

"How?"

"In an auto. I've ordered one already, an' it'll be out in front in twenty minutes."

"How d'you know what direction to take?"

"I saw 'em as they flew away. We'll take a chance on that an' make inquiries on the road."

"Yes, that's a good plan," commented Harry approvingly. "It'll be daylight pretty soon. Maybe we can see the ship."

At this suggestion, Don went to the east window and ran the curtain up again. Day was dawning rapidly, but it was not light enough yet to make the aeroplane visible, even if it was still flying toward the east. Just as they were about to go downstairs, Johnson and Ballantyne appeared in the room. Julian explained the situation in a few words.

"We want to go along," said Ballantyne. "Where can we get an auto?"

"Come on down stairs, an' I'll order one for you," said the sheriff.

They all descended into the dining room. Mr. Legler went direct to the telephone on the wall and took down the receiver.

"Hello," he said presently, "give me 4-5-7." After waiting half a minute, he continued:

"Hello, is this Ball? — This is Sheriff Legler. Say, Ed, send another machine over as soon as you can get it here. There's a couple of newspaper boys here want it. They're O. K. I'll stand behind 'em. Don't disappoint 'em. You've got another chauffeur there, ain't you? — Well, wake 'im up, an' hustle."

"He's a prince," whispered Ballantyne to Johnson.

“ Yes, an’ I’m goin’ to give him a good send-off in my story.”

“ So’m I.”

Meanwhile, Sheriff Legler was smiling in his sleeve. He was thanking his lucky star that the airship had been stolen, and he was thus given an opportunity to conduct a pursuit after the flying thieves and incidentally to extend courtesies to the newspaper representatives. And all the while, the thing uppermost in his mind was that coveted seat in the legislature at Madison.

While they were waiting for the automobile, Mr. Legler took his guests back into the jail and showed them the cell from which the prisoners had escaped. It was more like an ordinary, poorly furnished, uncarpeted room than a cell. The furniture consisted of a table, three chairs and three pine board cots, with a blanket each for a mattress and a stuffed canvas cushion for a pillow. The windows were “ protected ” with small iron bars set in the masonwork, their weakness and inefficiency being evident in the appearance of those that had been pried loose by the escaping prisoners.

“ You need a new jail,” said Harry Hartwick.

“ Yes,” replied Legler. “ This is a poor affair. I’m goin’ to ask the county board for a new one. I’ve been in office only a short time.”

“ Why did you put three prisoners in one cell? ” asked the inventor. “ Didn’t you have three empty cells? ”

“ Yes, that is — a — ” replied the sheriff, with a nervous glance toward the reporters; “ but they weren’t all ready; so I put ’em in here for the night. I intended to separate ’em this morning.”

Julian’s brother did not press his inquiry further and Legler hoped earnestly that the suggested criticism had not been noted seriously by the press representatives. In order to substitute a less embarrassing subject of conversation, he said:

“ The sun’s up, an’ it’s light. Let’s go out, an’ see if we can see the airship.”

There was general agreement to this proposal, and they all sought the spot where the aeroplane had rested the day before. The grass and grading and flower beds and rose and lilac bushes on the unfenced lawn had suffered considerably as a result of the trespassing of the townsfolk, but it

was county property, and a special fund was appropriated by the county board for keeping it up. Hence Mr. Legler did not worry over the damage done. "The people did the damage, and the people must pay for it."

But the condition of the lawn was a matter of small consideration now. In fact, the sheriff was the only person present who noticed it, and his attention was attracted elsewhere by excited words and actions from his guests. All of them seemed to have discovered the aeroplane at once.

It was in plain view, high in the air, several miles away and flying toward the east. Several of the sheriff's neighbors also had observed its disappearance from the lawn, and were now watching its lofty flight.

"They can't keep that up long," declared Harry Hartwick, as he gazed anxiously after his fleeing invention. "They haven't got gasoline enough."

"That's so," declared Julian. "We were pretty near out of it yesterday morning. They're liable to have a fall."

"No, there isn't much danger o' that," replied Harry. "Jake knows how to volplane. He can

coast down a bank of air just like you go down a toboggan slide. He's a good aeronaut if he is a rascal."

"Here come the automobiles," Billy Beckman announced.

"Yes, here they are," said the sheriff. "I'll run in and get some apples. We haven't had any breakfast, an' we'll all be good an' hungry before we overtake the airship."

Legler rushed into the house and soon reappeared with a basket of fine red winesaps, half of which he spilled into one of the machines and set the basket in the other. Just then a newspaper reporter from Milwaukee, who had arrived the night before, appeared on the scene.

"What's doing?" he asked.

"The air pirates broke out o' jail, an' ran off with the airship," replied Julian. "See, there they are," pointing up to the east.

"What are you goin' to do?" inquired the reporter.

"Follow 'em in autos."

"Got room for another?"

"Sure," replied Legler, without consulting

Johnson and Ballantyne, who had hired one of the machines. "Pile in wherever you can."

Just then Mrs. Legler, a small overworked woman, came out of the house. Her husband drew her aside and said:

"Go in an' get the Ludlow an' the Redmont Houses on the wire. Find out if there's any newspaper reporters stoppin' there. If there is, get 'em on the wire personally. Tell 'em what's happened, an' where we're goin'. An' tell 'em Sheriff Legler sent word to 'em — see? Remember, now, I'm goin' to run for the legislature."

"Which way you goin'?" asked Mrs. Legler nervously.

"Straight east on the Blue Mound road. See the airship off there?"

Don Collins did not intend to overhear this conversation, but he could not help it. He was standing on the part of the lawn where the airship had rested, and Mr. and Mrs. Legler were not more than fifteen feet from him. The rest were near the automobiles.

Don was watching the airship. Moreover, he had stood aside in order that he might not appear to be forcing himself into a place in one of the au-

tomobiles. They would want to make the greatest speed possible, and the fewer in the machines, the better for this purpose.

Suddenly, the boy's attention was attracted to a folded bit of paper on the grass. Something was written on the outside, and, looking close, he read the name, "Mr. Hartwick."

With a little cry of surprise, he picked it up. Julian, who had heard his exclamation and seen his action, called out:

"What's the matter, Don?"

"Here's something for your brother," replied Collins. "It's a note, I guess. It's got his name on it."

Don took the paper to Harry Hartwick, while all gathered around the inventor. The latter, with nervous fingers, unfolded the paper and read. All gazed at him with increasing wonder, eagerly waiting for him to announce the contents. Presently he spoke.

"It's a note from one o' those boys — Dick Harding. This is what he says: "

"Mr. Hartwick: — I hope you find this. I'm sorry I ever had anything to do with stealing your airship. We've broke out of jail and are going to

run off with it again. I tried to get Spellman and Phil not to do it, but they won't listen. Spellman said I had to go along or he'd kill me. He's afraid I'll raise an alarm if he leaves me behind. He says he's going to fly as far as Lake Michigan and then put enough gasoline in the tank to keep it going half an hour and turn it loose over the lake. I'm going to try to stop him and save the airship for you.

DICK HARDING."

CHAPTER XXIII

SHORT OF GASOLINE

“Just about what I thought,” declared Harry Hartwick, as he finished reading the note. “Spellman is bent on revenge. He’s got as wicked a heart as any man I ever met. He’ll do anything to get even.”

“All ready,” announced the sheriff. “Pile in.”

Don was invited by the reporters to get into their automobile, and he accepted the invitation gladly. In a few moments they were racing through the town at full speed. In five minutes they passed the city limits and were flying along a well macadamized country road. They had the highway almost to themselves, for few persons were driving about at this early hour. The aeroplane could be seen high up, six or seven miles ahead, pushing against a rather stiff current.

“We’ve got an advantage over ’em,” said the Milwaukee reporter, Arthur Fitzpatrick, who sat in the rear seat between Don and Ballantyne.

The Associated Press reporter sat in front with the chauffeur. Both automobiles were open roadsters.

"Yes," replied Ballantyne, "we're makin' three miles to their one. We'll catch 'em dead sure. They're workin' against the wind."

"They're tryin' to get out of it, too," said Don, as the aeroplane coasted downward a few hundred feet. "There, they've got it better," he observed as the craft flew ahead more rapidly.

"Yes, but we're gainin' on 'em still," declared Johnson. "We'll be right under 'em in less'n an hour."

"They've got a pretty stiff current against 'em still," said Don. "There isn't an automobile anywhere could race with the Nora if the wind's favorable."

"How fast can she go?" inquired Ballantyne.

"I don't think she's been timed," replied Don. "But if you'd been aboard when she was goin' her best without any wind, you wouldn't have any doubts."

"Hand over some o' those apples," said Johnson. "I never get so excited I can't eat."

"I never get excited at all," replied Ballan-

tyne, doing as requested. "I find that the reporters who get excited are the ones 'at get scooped."

"Well, you won't get scooped when the A. P. (Associated Press) is around," replied Johnson.

The reporters ate apples and bantered each other in this manner for some time. This sort of talk was interesting to Don, who kept still and listened. He had never met a metropolitan newspaper reporter before, and the conversation of these conveyed to him a good deal of the spirit of their life.

Johnson's prediction that they would be "right under the aeroplane in less'n an hour" proved to be practically correct. But before they "overtook" the flyer overhead, doings on board the latter indicated something of a panic. Suddenly the course of the *Nora* was turned to the right, and she ran directly south.

"I wonder what that means," said Johnson. "I thought, accordin' to that kid's note, she was makin' straight for Lake Michigan."

"It means, for one thing, we'll have to go south at the first turn," said the chauffeur. "They're tryin' to get away from us."

"I bet he's right," exclaimed Fitzpatrick. "We're comin' to a turn now. We'll find out pretty soon."

A minute later, a crossroad was reached, and the sheriff's machine, which was ahead, turned south. The rear automobile followed. In about five minutes, the aeroplane turned east again.

"You were right," declared Johnson, addressing the chauffeur, who was a young, wide-awake fellow. "What do you think they'll do next?"

"I know what I'd do if I was them," was the answer.

"What?"

"I'd make a fly kitty-corner across country. The roads run north an' south an' east an' west. These machines'd have to go half again as far as the airship. In that way, I think I could get away from you."

As if receiving the suggestion from the chauffeur, Spellman changed the course of the aeroplane again, flying toward the northeast.

"They're foxy all right," declared Ballantyne, producing a pad of paper and jotting down a few notes. "Glad of it. A poor villain makes a poor yarn. Those fellows are making the best news-

paper yarn this country has produced in a long while."

"They surely can't keep it up much longer," said Don.

"Why?" asked Ballantyne.

"'Cause they must be almost out o' gasoline."

In spite of the diagonal course of the aeroplane, the automobiles were able to hold their own in the race, but were unable to get directly under the Nora.

Dick Harding was sincere when he opposed this second stealing of the airship. When he saw he could make no favorable impression on Spellman or Phil, he asked that he be allowed to remain in the cell. But Jake would not consent to this, and made some strong threats to the boy. Then Dick pretended to change his mind, and to enter heartily into the scheme. He found an opportunity to scribble a note to Harry Hartwick while Spellman and Phil were busy getting the aeroplane ready to fly away and drop it on the ground just as they were ascending.

The flight was without special incident for nearly two hours. Meanwhile, little was said by any of the escaped prisoners. Jake sat in the

pilot seat and paid little attention to anything but guiding the vessel. Phil watched the engine, and Dick was left to do as he pleased.

It was shortly before the pursuit of the two automobiles was observed that Phil discovered the scarcity of gasoline in the tank. Spellman had looked in the tank before starting and noticed it was low, but planned to fill it up from one of the several cans in the cabin. When Phil examined these cans, however, he found them all empty.

The discovery almost threw him into a panic and he ran to the pilot room and informed Jake of their predicament. The latter received the information with an oath.

"How long'll it keep us goin'?" he asked.

"Not much more'n half an hour," replied Phil.

"Well, we'll keep goin' as long as we can, an' then abandon it," said Jake. "Let me know before it's all gone."

After Phil returned to the engine room, he looked out of the rear window and saw two automobiles coming at high speed three or four miles behind. He called Dick's attention to them and they both watched the machines for fifteen or twenty minutes.

"I wonder if they're after us," said Phil at last. "I'm goin' to tell Spellman about 'em."

Before starting for the pilot room, he inspected the gasoline again, and was pleased to note that it was not as low as he had anticipated. His first words to Jake were:

"I guess the gasoline'll last half an hour yet. But I'm afraid we're bein' followed."

"How?" asked Jake incredulously.

"There's a couple of automobiles' chasin' after us like mad. I've been watchin' 'em for fifteen minutes. They've almost caught up."

"I'll change the course an' you see if they follow suit," proposed Spellman.

Phil watched the automobiles and saw them turn south at the next crossroads. Then the aeroplane was turned east again and the machines did likewise as soon as possible.

"I'm goin' northeast as far as the gasoline'll take us, an' then land," said Spellman. "We've got to get clear of 'em an' then make a run for it. There's some woods over there. We c'n slip through them, an' throw the officers off our track."

"You think they're policemen," asked Phil tremblingly.

"Sure they are," replied Jake. "Who else'd be follerin' us? Go back an' see how the gasoline is."

Phil hurried away and soon returned with this announcement: "It's pretty low, but I guess it'll last fifteen minutes yet."

"We'll make it all right," declared Jake. "I'm goin' to land in that field off there next to the woods."

Meanwhile the automobiles were tearing along at full speed. At every crossroad they turned, describing a zig-zag course to the northeast, and keeping within half a mile or a mile of the fleeing aeroplane. At last, she was seen to drop a hundred feet or more, continue some distance at this altitude and then drop again, lower, lower.

"She's goin' to land!" exclaimed Johnson.

"Yes, they're out o' gasoline," said Don. "Now, if we can only catch up with 'em before Spellman has a chance to do any damage."

"He won't stop for that," said Ballantyne. "He'll want to save himself."

"I'm not so sure o' that," replied Don. "Mr. Hartwick says he's a revengeful man."

The Nora alighted in a hayfield at the edge of a

large patch of woods. The automobiles were run as near to the spot as possible, and then the air-pirate hunters got out, climbed over a fence and ran toward the abandoned aeroplane. But before she was abandoned, a thrilling scene took place aboard her.

As the vessel alighted, Spellman ordered the boys to get out and run for the woods. Phil obeyed, telling Dick to follow him, but the latter did not follow. He remained aboard and watched Spellman.

"Why don't you cut for the woods?" asked Jake impatiently. "You'll get caught if you don't."

"Why don't you?" replied Dick.

"I've got somethin' to do before I go. Get off this airship before I throw you off."

"What you goin' to do?"

"Have my revenge. I'm goin' to set the engine goin' an' send her up an' let 'er fall when the gasoline gives out."

Dick had suspected as much. How could he prevent it? He could not hope to match his strength against that of Spellman. He must use strategy.

He must act quickly. Spellman was tying the

wheel, and setting some of the levers preparatory to sending the aeroplane up without pilot.

“Wait till I get my knife. I left it in the engine room.”

With these words, Dick dashed through the cabin. He had lied. His knife was in his pocket.

He had studied the engine a good deal, and knew just what to do. There was a faucet at the bottom of the gasoline tank. He threw this open, and the little remaining gasoline ran out.

Dick dashed back into the cabin and there met Spellman. The latter's face was like a thundercloud. He had observed the boy's trick and was tearing toward the engine room to close the faucet. As he passed Dick in the cabin, he aimed a blow at him, but the boy dodged, sprang to the gangway and leaped to the ground.

Spellman saw at once that he was too late, and snarled out an imprecation. Then he, too, sprang out of the aeroplane as if to wreak vengeance on the youth. He halted a moment, and with good reason. The pursuers had left the automobile and were running across the fields and Dick was running toward them.

No attempt was made to pursue them further.

The air-pirate hunters gathered around the reformed boy pirate and listened to his story. Dick was a modest fellow now. His repentance had taken the starch out of his former lawlessness and bravado, and the newspaper reporters found enough good qualities in him to convert him into a hero.

One of the automobiles was dispatched to a near-by village for a can of gasoline, and in half an hour the Nora was in condition for a return trip. While they were waiting for the gasoline, half a dozen more reporters arrived in automobiles, Mrs. Legler having carried out her husband's instructions.

"I bet you can't carry all this crowd back to Oberton," said the sheriff, addressing the inventor. He was still thinking of the legislature, and knew well enough that the press representatives were eager for a ride in the aeroplane.

"I bet I can," replied Harry, unhesitatingly. "Everybody who wants a ride in the airship, get aboard."

Nobody hesitated, and pretty soon, fifteen men and boys were flying through the air five hundred feet from the earth. Only the chauffeurs were left with the automobiles.

The ride back was uneventful. One of the reporters suggested that they fly over the woods in search of the aeroplane thieves, but the inventor would not consent to this. He said that he had no desire to punish them inasmuch as he had regained possession of the *Nora* in good condition.

The aeroplane alighted again on the lawn of Sheriff Legler, and was greeted by a great throng of townsfolk. No sooner had she touched the earth than a dignified gray-haired man sprang like a boy up the gangway. It was Mr. Beebe. Don wondered again at the familiarity with which he grasped the hand of Harry Hartwick. But he was not left long in doubt. Presently Julian seized his friend by the arm and led him up to the Greenwood school director.

“Don,” he said; “don’t faint with surprise. Let me introduce you to my uncle, the owner of the *Nora*.”

CHAPTER XXIV

JULIAN'S SECRET

A more astonished boy perhaps it would be hard to find than Don Collins when he heard this announcement. Since his first acquaintance with Julian he had found him more and more a boy of mystery. It seemed that all was now about to be cleared up and his friend's closely kept secrets revealed.

Mr. Beebe, Julian's uncle and owner of the airship! Then Julian was not a poor boy after all! But he was. He was too proud to accept unearned assistance from his millionaire uncle and had therefore gone to school in poor clothes. His brother insisted that he attend Greenwood because that was the institution in which every male member of the family for two generations had been educated.

When Mr. Hartwick made a model of his proposed airship and showed it to Uncle Dick, the latter at once became enthusiastic over it and offered to supply his nephew with money to build

the ship, agreeing to pay twenty-five thousand dollars more if it proved a success. Both Mr. Beebe and Mr. Hartwick had a sense of the value of advertisement, and they therefore decided to construct the ship secretly and to fly it at night in a spectacular manner. The principal foundry and general shopwork was done in Chicago and the parts shipped to the factory in the woods where Mr. Hartwick and his wife lived during the construction of the vessel. On the two trips that Don and Julian made with the inventor, Mr. Beebe was not present, as he preferred to remain on the solid earth and watch the play of the searchlights and the glitter of the fireworks.

Julian's relationship to Mr. Beebe was not known even to President Bacon, for Julian had been sensitive as to his poverty, which had come upon him and his brother simultaneously with the death of their father two years before. He had therefore chosen to enter the academy as a boy of poor family working his way. He was peculiar in this respect and perhaps foolish. But he could not bear to be an object of curiosity or pity, which he certainly would have been if it had become known at the academy that his father,

who had once been rich and part owner of the school, had died bankrupt.

As all his visits to the airship factory in the woods had to be made secretly, Julian found it necessary to steal away after dark on many occasions. He helped in the construction work at night and on Saturdays, thus repaying in part the money lent him by his brother while he was obtaining an education.

Jake Spellman and Phil Dunbar were caught two weeks later by the police of a town a hundred miles away. The latter would have left Spellman, but his nerve had quite forsaken him. Jake kept him in constant fear of the law by ingenious and specious threats, so that Phil became meeker and meeker as the days passed.

One morning Jake sent Phil into a town to buy provisions. He was afraid to show himself, so he sent the boy and remained in hiding. A description of both had been sent to the police of this town by Sheriff Legler, and Phil was recognized and arrested. After tangling himself up when questioned, he finally confessed, and his companion was captured.

Spellman was convicted on a criminal charge

and sent to the penitentiary. Harry Hartwick, however, refused to appear against Phil Dunbar and the latter was released. Dick Harding's repentance and action in preventing the chief air pirate from destroying the aeroplane won for him not only the forgiveness of the inventor, but the pardon of President Bacon as well.

The Happy Hide-out Club went out of existence with the disappearance of Phil from the school, and President Bacon caused their cave to be destroyed. Who drew the picture of "Prexie Porkie" on the blackboard was never revealed. Perhaps the artist himself is the only person who knows, and he may be still a student of the academy.

Stacey Williams and Homer Bradley were suspended for one month because of the part they took in the assault on Don and Julian in the woods, and in the stealing of the airship. They are back in school now, much better behaved boys. Billy Beckman is a close friend of Don and Julian and has thrown off the bad effects of his former association with the Dunbarites. One day President Bacon called Don into his office and exonerated him of the charge made by Phil Dunbar

concerning the fight on the campus. A confession had been forced from Phil at his home, not only of the truth of this incident, but of many others. Don was happy now, although charitably sorry for Phil.

As for the airship, the reader must know all about that. The newspapers have been full of its wonderful success. Any reader must have seen Don's and Julian's pictures in the papers when accounts were printed of the mysterious doings of an unknown airship in that part of the country.

